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PREFACE

Joseph Medill left no records of himself and he has not had a biographer. The materials from which this study has been made have been gathered accordingly from many different sources, yielding only a few details at a time. Nothing comprehensive could be found. It has been necessary, therefore, to weigh the facts carefully and where two statements of apparently equal value conflict to give them both.

Mr. Medill and the Tribune have likewise here been studied their effect on journalism rather than from that of their political influence, which was greater. Although they have been found to have contributed little directly to the development of the American newspaper, the leading position which Mr. Medill as an editor and the Tribune as a newspaper maintained in Chicago and the Middle West nevertheless make them conspicuous in the history of American journalism.



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## JOSEPH MEDILL AND THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

### CHAPTER I

#### Life and Character

##### 1. Early Life:

Joseph Medill was born in St. John, a small village of New Brunswick, Canada, on April 6th, 1823. His parents had come to America direct from Ireland in 1819. Further than this there is nothing of his ancestry to be discovered in the printed records. In speaking of his later friendship with Horace Greeley an anonymous writer has, however, this to say:

Fighting blood ran in the veins of both men for both were of Scotch Irish extraction though Greeley was born in Connecticut and Medill in Canada - right on the borderland of Maine - then regarded American territory - but later given to Canada - a "bitter disappointment" and one that he carried to the grave. He never considered himself other than an American.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the matter of self-education during these years he was assiduous. He read such newspapers and periodicals, including Greeley's New York Weekly Tribune, as came his way. It is said that, like Abraham Lincoln, lacking books himself, he ran through with every book in the library of a neighbor.

"He began to prepare for college [we are told], but in the midst of this preparation misfortune by fire befell the family, and the young man turned directly to the business of his life."<sup>(2)</sup> He read law in an office in Canton, Ohio, and taught school between times. A friend from Canton,

(1) Material in Tribune "morgue". Dated 1907.

(2) Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1899.



-2-

who was with him in San Antonio, Texas, during the last few months of his life tells Mr. Medill's personal reminiscences of this period.

He told me that he studied law in the country under one of the members of our Canton bar while he was teaching school, and that during the same period he contributed more or less to the town papers thereabout. His school teaching was in a district school in the country, until sometime late in the 40's, when he happened in a lawyer's office in New Philadelphia, a small town in Tuscarawas County, south of Canton, on some business of his own, where a dispute arose between several prominent men of the town as to what should be done with the local district schools. The difficulty was that the larger boys in the school had become obstreperous and had whipped the teacher, giving him notice not to return to the school, and the teacher had resigned. Medill being right in the business, remarked that he would like to see the class of boys who would drive him out of school, when one of the board, who was present, said: "Medill is the very man we want." And, as the New Philadelphia district paid much better than the one in the country (which was then paying him \$25 per month), the result was that he was then and there engaged to take charge in New Philadelphia. He whipped the largest boy and that was the last of the insurrection. The fire was out, and from that time on the worst boys of the school were his friends. "And as for the girls," said he, "I married one of them."

His law studies over, he was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1846, and began to practice in New Philadelphia. But the law did not hold him long.

How he first became a compositor, a typesetter, was told by Mr. Medill himself in this manner:

"When I was a law student I lived near the county seat and was fond of going over there. There were two papers published in the town, each, by the way, being bitterly opposed to the other. J. F. Elliott, nephew of the late commander Elliott, was the editor of one and a particular friend of mine. I was fond of going into his office and watching him set type."

(1) G. W. H. in Chicago Times Herald, March 20, 1899.



"Why don't you take me on?" I said to him one day when he was complaining about being short for help.

"All right, I'll do it," he said. "I'll give you the same chance as anyone else. You can pay for your board and clothes for the privilege of being taught," and Elliott laughed, not thinking that I would take him up. But I did. Seeing that I was in earnest he got me a stick and showed me how to hold it. Then he showed me how the "car" letters ran across the top and how the small letters were placed."

"Now, said Elliott, 'Hold your stick so, and pick up your letters carefully and be sure to have theicks outside and the letters right and left. Well, I was ambitious and thought I had learned the case at first glance, and just to show how proficient I could be I worked like a beaver and wasn't much worried over whether I picked the right letter or not."

"This thing's full," said I, and Elliott showed me how to dump it. Then they took a proof, and showed it to me. There were probably 125 mistakes in that proof, and it hung up in the office as a standing joke on me for a long time."

He continued: "Well, I stuck to the case and wasn't discouraged, and by and by I could get up 500 cms in an hour, which was not very bad for a beginning. Then it was that the office made a good thing of me. Elliott had me grind off his rollers and ink the rollers and set type, and, in short, I hustled for him in every sense of the word. Then the other office got mad and sent for me, declaring that it was only fair that I come and help them out. So I went over there and slaved when not studying. I think some of the work I did at those two offices would surprise the average young newspaper man. Why, I was expected to grind out 400 or 500 sheets for each of those people, and I tell you the sweat would just roll off me. Sometimes one of them would send for me and remark: "Say, Medill, think up some editorial and then set it up - that's a good fellow.' "(1)

## 2. Journalistic Career.

Before he had practiced law for three years Medill had definitely decided to give up that profession for newspaper work. There were good reasons for this:

The three younger brothers were growing up without a career. A newspaper in the family would supply this deficit. Joseph Medill found means to buy a plant in 1849, installing himself as editor and his brothers as assistants in various capacities. In his own language, "the law lingered a little while to reclaim the recusant, but he had tasted the delight of Franklin's nectar and he never returned." His brothers, particularly William H. and Samuel J., were closely associated with him throughout his journalistic career.

The paper he bought was called the Coshocton Whig, but Mr. Medill changed it to the Coshocton Republican. This journal gave free exercise to its new editor's tastes and talents for

(1) G. W. H. in Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.



politics, and with its aid the Republicans carried the county, which had always been Democratic. Most likely the campaign which followed the purchase of the Coshocton paper had a determining effect upon his subsequent career. He conducted the campaign to win by giving the enemy hard blows. He was assaulted several times while returning from his office, but with the exception of receiving some severe cuts and bruises, he passed through the ordeal unscathed. He was frequently called to account personally in his office by aggravated Democrats, but he made no change in the tone of the editorials. His success in electing the Whig ticket, and giving the Democrats their first defeat in that county was the triumph which fixed his future course.

At the end of two years Mr. Medill sold the Coshocton Republican and with the purchase money and some more, removed to Cleveland.

There was in Cleveland at that time no Whig morning paper, but there was an evening paper of that faith, and also a Free Soil paper. Mr. Medill established a morning paper, which he named the Daily Forest City. A year later he consolidated it with a Free Soil journal and named it the Cleveland Leader. This was the beginning of Mr. Medill's experience with daily journalism. (1)

After being in Cleveland a year or more he married. The facts of his marriage and family life are given in his obituary:-

Joseph Medill married on Sept. 2, 1852, Miss Katherine Patrick, a daughter of James Patrick of New Philadelphia, O. Mrs. Medill was born in New Philadelphia on Sept. 25, 1831. She died at Elmhurst, Ill., on October 1, 1894. During the war she took part in the labors of the Sanitary Commission and later was closely identified with the Soldier's Home. After the fire she devoted her time largely to the work of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society and was until her health failed, active in charity work....

There were three children, two of whom survive. They are Mrs. Eleanor Medill Patterson and Mrs. Katherine Medill McCormick. A third daughter, Miss Josephine Medill, died in Paris in January 1892. There are four living grand children. Joseph Medill and Eleanor Patterson and Joseph Medill and Rutherford McCormick. (2)

At this time Mr. Medill became acquainted with the group of great American personal journalists of whom, in his later years, he was among the last surviving members. The obituary says further:

(1) Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1899.

(2) Ibid.



The early friendships of Mr. Medill's life were of course many and interesting. While yet a country editor, he formed a deep personal attachment for Horace Greeley, and maintained a correspondence with him. At the same time he became acquainted with Thurlow Weed, then the leader of the Whigs in the Empire State. In the widening of his field by the removal to Cleveland the young editor added James Gordon Bennett, the elder, James Watson Webb, and Cassius M. Clay to his list of friends. His acquaintance with Cassius M. Clay was made while the latter was editing abolition papers in Kentucky, and having them thrown onto the Ohio River. It was one of Mr. Medill's regrets that he could never get to talk politics with Mr. Bryant, who was then the editor of the New York Evening Post. Mr. Bryant was willing to talk literature with the young Western editor, but when the latter drifted to a political subject Mr. Bryant invariably turned him over to his assistant. (1)

It is said on unsupported authority that Greeley was attracted to a series of "very remarkable and brilliant articles" in the Cleveland Leader "assailing the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and the men who voted for it," that he sought out Mr. Medill; and that, moreover, in 1854 or '55 he gave him his famous advice - "Go West, young man, go west!" pointing out that Chicago, as a railroad and navigation center, was certain to have a great future. However that may be, it is certain that Medill had a warm friendship with Greeley, and looked to him in the early days for leadership on political issues, though later, in the '70's, he repudiated him. This connection is brought out in the account of the part which Medill played (2) in the formation of the Republican party early in the '50's.

Shortly after Scott's crushing defeat in 1852, and before Senator Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska bill had set the abolitionists wild, Mr. Medill wrote letters to the leaders of the dis-

(1) Tribune, March 17, 1899.

(2) Material in Tribune "Morgue".



organized Whig party asking if they would assist in the formation of a new Republican party on the ruins of the old Whig organization. First of all he wrote to Horace Greeley, with whom for some years he had had a considerable intimacy. He had been a correspondent of the New York Tribune, and visited Mr. Greeley in New York, and when Mr. Greeley in his lecturing tour in 1853 visited the Western Reserve, it was Mr. Medill who entertained him.

Greeley approved, as did most of the other political leaders to whom he broached the plan, of a new party.

Affairs were in this shape when one night in March, 1854, Mr. Medill called a meeting in the office of the Cleveland Leader, of leading men of the three parties - Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats. The summons was in a measure secret and addressed only to men whom Mr. Medill thought he could trust as friends of a new party with a new name. About twenty responded. Mr. Medill disclosed his object and frankly broached the proposition to organize a new party out of the elements represented at the meeting and name it the "Republican Party". Much discussion followed, chiefly concerning the name. Mr.

Salmon P. Chase was known to be opposed to it. He argued that the new name should be "Free Democracy" (as against "Slave Democracy"). About a dozen men were won over from the Chase side, and when a vote was taken about midnight, two thirds of those present assented to the Medill proposition, which was reduced to form about this:

Name of the new party: National Republican Platform:  
no more slave states; no more slave territory; resistance to



pro-slavery aggression; slavery is sectional; liberty is national.....

It is not strictly true, Mr. Medill once said, "that we were first to announce in public the new party and the new name; but it is a fact that none of the other meetings in any State antedated our little gathering in the Leader office in March,  
<sup>(1)</sup>  
1854."

Shortly after this important event Medill went to Chicago, possibly with the idea of advancing the interests of the party in Illinois. There he soon became interested in the Tribune which was then one of the seven or eight struggling newspapers in a city of 16,000 people. There are two accounts of his going to Chicago, and the beginning of his connection with the Tribune, the first of which is a report of his own words:

"In the fall of 1854, " said Mr. Medill, "I disposed of my interest in the Cleveland Leader and went to Chicago, and in the corridor of the Sherman House I was introduced to the Dr. Ray to whom you refer. He was a journalist, and after considerable talk about our profession I told him I was in Chicago with the intention of starting a newspaper. Mr. Ray told me about the bankrupt Tribune, which was losing money every day, and suggested that it would be a good plan to get control of it. As the newspaper at that time was of no use to anyone, this was not hard to do, with Dr. Ray as one of my associates. We took it a losing proposition, but it made money the first month and

(1) Obituary, Tribune, March 17, 1899.



every month since, up to this date! <sup>(1)</sup>

The other is fuller and gives a more circumstantial account of Mr. Medill's reasons for leaving Cleveland:

In the winter of 1854.- '55 Mr. Medill received a call from Captain J. D. Webster, afterwards General Webster and chief of Grant's staff at Shiloh. Captain Webster owned an interest in the Chicago Tribune and was in need of a managing editor. He persuaded Mr. Medill to visit Chicago, and look over the field. It was a change for the young Ohioan from the finished elegance of Cleveland to the turmoil of the prairie metropolis, but he liked it because he foresaw a great city to be built out of that quagmire near the head of the lake, in his own day. He bought an interest in The Tribune, and before that transaction was consummated met Dr. C. H. Ray of Galena, who bore a letter from Horace Greeley to Mr. Medill urging him to join Ray in starting a new paper in Chicago. The outcome of this was that Dr. Ray bought into the Tribune also. Mr. Medill returned to Cleveland and sold his interest in the Leader to Edwin Cowles. A brother of the latter, Alfred Cowles, came to Chicago with Mr. Medill. After acting as book-keeper for the firm about a year, Mr. Cowles bought a one third interest in the paper. It was then owned by Dr. Ray, Mr. Medill, and Mr. Cowles in three equal shares. Dr. Ray was the chief editor and Mr. Medill was managing editor. The local force consisted of one man, and it was expected of the managing editor to do all the other work outside of the editorial columns. <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) G. W. H. in Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.

(2) Obituary, Tribune, March 17, 1899.



Immediately upon coming to Illinois Medill became identified with Republican politics and soon began to support Abraham Lincoln. How Mr. Medill came to support Lincoln actively is told in the following paragraphs from the obituary in the Tribune:

It was long before the war that Mr. Medill made the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln and formed a friendship which endured to the end of the President's life. Early in 1856 a convention of anti-Nebraska editors of Illinois was held in Decatur, which was attended by Abraham Lincoln, who made a characteristic speech. A platform was adopted and a delegate State convention was called to be held in Bloomington on May 29 of that year. It was at this convention that Lincoln made his great speech which by its magnetic power and convincing eloquence so aroused everybody that the reporters forgot to make a report of it. The Tribune was represented in the convention both on the floor and at the reporter's table. Mr. Medill, although a delegate, was also present to report its proceedings. The current of events in the convention cast Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Medill much together.

In those days Mr. Lincoln was described as a gawky, joke-telling, ill-dressed, modest, astute country lawyer, who had some business in the courts of Chicago. He used to give a few hours now and then to Leonard Volk, the sculptor, who seemed to see and know the future greatness of the man. But oftener than to any other place in Chicago, outside of Court hours, Mr. Lincoln would go to The Tribune office, and climb the stairs, and sit in the literary work shop of Mr. Medill, with his feet on the edge of the editor's desk. It was in these conferences that Mr. Medill would press upon Mr. Lincoln the duty of taking the most advanced position on the paramount issue of the time, the effectual reconciliation of the constitution with the true principles of national sovereignty and universal individual rights.

Mr. Medill was one of the first to start the campaign which resulted in Lincoln's nomination for the presidency. Rev. Robert Collyer, a close personal friend of Medill's, who preached his funeral oration recalls Medill's part in the convention of 1860:

A few old men still remember when the great host met in



the Wigwam on the first nomination of Mr. Lincoln and what a passion rocked that vast multitude! For I was there and felt it. And when the conflict of ideas kindled into the conflict of armed men; when in our own city there was dissension and division the voice of my friend sounded as I would read his living words in my morning paper, summoning the host for the defense of the nation and her salvation. (1)

During the War he was very influential in aiding the administration. "Mr. Medill", we read again in his obituary, "was one of the organizers of the powerful and influential Union defense committee, which became, during the civil war, the mainstay of the government in this section." "Of course," we read further, "Mr. Medill took a keen interest in the recruiting and enlistment of the volunteer regiments in the city." His brother William, who had been in the service of the Tribune, commanded a body of infantry and Joseph Medill himself encouraged the enlistment of many Tribune employees.

During the latter two years of the War Mr. Medill was for the first time editor-in-chief, and the Tribune supported Mr. Lincoln and the administration on every occasion. It was in this policy of steady support of Lincoln that he first broke away from the leadership of Horace Greeley. After the war and the days of military reconstruction during which his support first of the President and then of Congress had been so strong, Mr. Medill gave up a large part of his duties on the Tribune to take part actively in public life. The City Council of Chicago on the occasion of his death in 1899 reviewed his public services in brief as follows:

(1) Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1899.



In the passing of Joseph Medill our city has suffered the loss of one of its most venerable, honored, and distinguished citizens. As Mayor of the City from Dec. 4, 1871, until September, 1873, he rendered conspicuous service to this municipality in its highest office. In accepting a non-partisan nomination to the Mayoralty he made the condition that the public-spirited citizens of both parties who tendered it should endeavor, at the ensuing session of the Legislature, to give Chicago an amended charter, placing its several independent boards under the control of the Mayor and Council, and conferring on the Mayor the power of appointment, subject to the Council's approval. This condition was heartily accepted by his supporters, and the result was the passage, soon after he took the Mayoralty, of the "Mayer's bill" embodying the reforms which he suggested, and enabling him to give the city a systematic, efficient, and successful administration. The feature of this bill, which was created expressly for his term of office, were made the basis of the general municipal incorporation act of the State, under which, with later amendments, the City of Chicago is still operating. Among the good things accomplished by the administration of Mayor Medill was the complete divorce of the Fire Department, [the extension of the fire limits], and a similar temporary divorce of the Police department therefrom, and the establishment of the Chicago Public Library.

In Mr. Medill, as a public-spirited citizen, and the directing genius of a great newspaper, and an important political factor, the City of Chicago has had a valuable and devoted champion of its best interests.

As citizens of Illinois we would recognize the great service which he rendered to our State as a member of the constitutional convention which framed the constitution of 1870. The principle of minority representation by Senatorial districts, and many other good features of the constitution, are to be attributed to his wise judgment and strong influence.

As citizens of the United States we would recognize the conspicuous part which he bore in securing the nomination for the Presidency for Abraham Lincoln; in his conduct as a member of the first Civil Service commission, appointed by President Grant, and his loyalty to the later enactments<sup>(1)</sup> in favor of civil service reform, both national and municipal.

During this period of active political life, Mr. Medill retained an interest in the Tribune while Mr. Horace White, later editor of the New York Evening Post, was editor-in-chief. Mr. White, contrary to the wishes of Mr. Medill and

(1) Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1899.



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Mr. Bross, another proprietor, bolted the regular Republican nominee, General Grant, in 1872 and supported Horace Greeley on an opposition ticket. Many of the subscribers who were staunch Republicans, cancelled their subscriptions and Mr. Medill insisted that he be allowed to buy a controlling share or that the Tribune company prepare for his complete withdrawal with all the disastrous consequences that that would involve. Mr. White was also a high protectionist (one point on which Mr. Medill disagreed with the national Republican party) and for some time prevailed in making protection a policy of the Tribune. Mr. White finally consented, however, to step out, and in 1873 Mr. Medill, who was still in Europe on a trip began shortly after he resigned the mayoralty, purchased from him and Mr. Cowles, the business manager, enough shares to give him control, or one hundred and five of a total of two hundred. Late in 1874 Mr. Medill assumed complete editorial control of the paper, a control which continued in his hands for twenty-five years until his death in 1899. This was the principal journalistic period of his life and one in which he exercised increasing influence in municipal, state, and national affairs through the editorial columns of the Tribune.

During this period it is recorded that he was active in the business life of the city and that at one time he held the vice-presidency of the Chicago Commercial Association, and was director, at times, of several banks. He was also at one time president of the Chicago Press Club,



and a director of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Due to his advanced age, his control over the paper weakened in the late '80's and devolved largely on assistants. He retained almost to the very last, however, a close supervision over the editorial page, sending daily editorials and suggestions by letter and telegraph from his winter home in San Antonio.

Speaking of the last few months of his life a Chicago contemporary of the Tribune says:

Mr. Medill left for San Antonio early in November, his last public appearance in Chicago being at the jubilee ball given in honor of the soldiers of the late war and President McKinley. His editorial work on the Tribune contained up to last Sunday. . .

He died March 16, 1899 and was buried in Chicago on March 22nd. His dying remarks were:

"My last words shall be: 'What is the news?'".

### 3. Character.

The records reveal very little of Medill, the man. We can only judge of his qualities by certain random facts gleaned from many all too brief and unsatisfactory sources. The strength of his character as well as its austerity is pictured very well in a few words by one of his contemporaries:

His early education, home training, struggles with poverty, early religious inclination to strict Calvinism, gave him arruggedness of character, determination of purpose and unyielding will that for the period during which he dominated the political thought of the West and Northwest was

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 17, 1899.



(1)

absolutely needed to be successful.

That those who knew him only on slight acquaintance may have misjudged him, however, is indicated by Rev. Robert Collyer:

I used to think in the early time that my friend was not a man with a tender and sweet nature. I was mistaken, as you know best who knew him best. You see he had a stern and hard battle to fight and he must fight in full and strong armour.... But a gentle heart beat beneath that armour.... (2)

An editorial writer on the Tribune, on the morning after his death, gives a comprehensive picture of Mr. Medill as he was known to his associates in the Tribune office:

Of Joseph Medill the man, only those with whom he was intimately and continuously associated can speak correctly and appreciatively. They will remember him as a man of tender heart and spotless integrity of soul, a true friend and a sagacious counsellor, of earnest convictions and of fearless independence in uttering them of untiring industry and strong intellectual grasp of affairs, eager in his search for knowledge, peculiarly retentive in memory, quick of observation, and having the faculty of crystallizing his observations into valuable practical suggestions; full of resources and quick to act upon them, even in emergencies; genial in his contact with his associates and loved and respected by everyone in the Tribune force as his teacher and chief. (3)

Rev. Robert Collyer, speaking further of his personal demeanor, says:

I love again to note the pure and steadfast simplicity and austerity of my friend. He was just Joseph Medill to the end of the story -- sweet and clean, simple and modest, in his life, in his habit and demeanor before men, and he never seemed to be saying, "Now, look at me. Consider who I am. I was a poor boy on a farm once, and see now what I am -- a self-made man."

Again speaking of the intellectual qualities which are

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 17, 1899.

(2) Tribune, March 22, 1899.

(3) Tribune, March 17, 1899.



mentioned in the Tribune editorial, the Rev. Mr. Collyer says:

He possessed the seer's glance toward the future, and, seeing, he said things must be done before we, who are of the rank and file, could believe the time was ripe for them. But they were apt to come true. He was steady as Monadnock to his conviction, to his purpose and to his work<sup>(1)</sup>

It is said of Medill that he had a mind absolutely open on every subject and acquisitive to the last degree. "Susceptible to all impressions", says a contemporary writing in the Chicago Times-Herald of March 20, 1899, "it was tempermental with Mr. Medill to be momentarily dominated by his deductions from the last one." That he was particularly interested not only in every new departure in economics or political science, but also in natural or pseudo-science is attested by various employees of the Tribune company who were with the paper before Mr. Medill's death.

An incident is likewise told which may indicate a certain mental viewpoint:

Lincoln said to Mr. Medill once, in the former's dark days before his first presidential fight:

"Aren't you an optimist?"

"A man ought to be and you must be an optimist," was the retort.<sup>(2)</sup>

Mr. Medill's early poverty produced marked characteristics which, it is safe to say, abided with him always. He was never anything but thrifty. Henry N. Cary, at one time connected with the Tribune, tells of seeing the janitor one day in the later and more prosperous years of the Tribune mixing water with the paste used on the editorial desks. One of the editors protested. "Mr. Medill's orders", replied the janitor,

(1) Chicago Times Herald, March 20, 1899.

(2) Ibid



"he says you fellows are using too much paste."

Mr. Medill was a loyal Presbyterian all his life, always contributing generously toward the expenses of his church and holding the highest regard and friendship for his near-life-long pastor, the Rev. Mr. Robert M. Patterson.

Together with the other members of Dr. Patterson's church, he was a most uncompromising abolitionist.

Indeed, he frequently carried his religion over into politics and his politics almost became a religion. An anonymous writer says:

As Carlyle would say "the divine fire was with the man" for all his writings were notably imbued with an almost religious fervor.<sup>(1)</sup>

With all this he carried a certain family pride and affection which were very strong. In his will he expressed the wish that The Tribune never be allowed to leave the control of the Medill family. Though very thrifty, it is said of him that he was always very liberal to his family, particularly to his grandchildren.

The possession of wealth enabled him to gratify his intellectual tastes. His large private library was one of the finest in Chicago, while it is recorded by Andreas in his History of Chicago that Mr. Medill contributed valuable paintings to the first art exhibition held in the city.<sup>(2)</sup>

It remains only to note a hobby- a pet reform -of Mr. Medill's which apparently took hold of him in early youth and

(1) Material in Tribune "morgue".

(2) Andreas, A.T. History of Chicago, Vol. 3. p. 371.



possessed him practically until the day of his death. In 1867 there was issued from one of the presses of Chicago a small pamphlet which bore the title:

Educational  
An Easy Method of Spelling  
The English Language  
----

Silent letters omitted, every sound  
represented without the aid of new  
characters

--

By Joseph Medill

A great admirer of Franklin, he was chosen in 1896 to deliver the annual address before the Old Time Printers' Association of Chicago, and he said on that occasion:

He [Franklin] devised a system of reformed orthografy which if adopted would have greatly shortened and simplified the spellings of the English language, and thereby promoted immensely the diffusion of education and knowledge among the masses; but the inveteracy of habit defeated his beneficent purpose and millions have lived and died poor spellers, to be laughed at, ridiculed and jeered by the comparative few who have ever mastered the absurdities, intricacies and anomalies of our hotch-potch orthografy. (1)

Joseph Medill is not a man about whom entertaining stories and anecdotes are told. He had few friends, but such as he had were close. Like his successor in the management of the paper, Mr. Keeley, he put his whole self, outside of his public service, into the making of the Tribune. In it, it is justly said, he has an enduring monument.

(1) "A Typical American: Benjamin Franklin," Chicago, 1907.



CHAPTER II.

History of the Tribune

1. Early Days.

The Chicago Tribune claims to be the oldest newspaper in Chicago, being the natural successor to the Democrat, which was started in 1833, three years after the settlement of the city, and which, during the War, was consolidated with the Tribune.

The first issue of the Tribune itself, however, appeared on June 10th, 1847. The Chicago Journal of that date had the following to say concerning this issue:

Chicago Daily Tribune - A large and well printed sheet with the above title was laid on our table this morning. Messrs. Wheeler and Forrest are the editors of this paper and the prospectus assures the public that The Tribune is to be "neutral in nothing - independent in everything." The mechanical execution of The Tribune is beautiful and reflects great credit upon the art. (1)

The population of Chicago at that time was estimated to be about 16,000. It already had two or three other daily papers, but was rapidly growing. The story of the founding of the paper is told after this manner:

The name Tribune was selected for the daily paper by Colonel Forrest after considerable opposition on the part of the other proprietors. They were desirous of publishing a journalistic "fad" of the period, but Forrest objected. He pointed to the fact that the principal patrons of the paper would for a long time be Whigs; that the rising anti-slavery sentiment of the country, to which the new journal would appeal, was largely Whig; that, though Mr. Greeley's venture in New York was of the same name, yet the name originally was a Chicago suggestion and product, and that to call the Journal The Tribune was simply to rehabilitate an original enterprise.

The reference is to the Illinois Tribune published for the first time in Chicago on April 4th, 1839 and understood to be the first paper in the United States to make use of the name Tribune.

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Number. June 10, 1897.  
(2) Ibid.



During the first year of the existence of the paper, Mr. Wheeler, who had been previously connected with the New York Tribune and afterwards returned to that paper, was editor-in-chief while Mr. Stewart acted as business manager. This order continued until June 30, 1851, when Mr. Wheeler retired, giving place to Thomas J. Waite, who became business manager. Mr. Waite lived a little over a year, dying of cholera on Aug. 26, 1852, when his interest was taken by Henry Fowler. During most of this period it is understood that Mr. Scripps was the principal editorial writer. Mr. Stewart took later charge of the city columns.(1)

William Bross, one of the earliest settlers in Chicago and later one of the owners of The Tribune, tells the following of the early days of the paper:

You will expect me to say something of the press of the city. In 1848 the Journal had rooms in what was then the Saloon Building on the southeast corner of Clark and Lake Streets. The Gem of the Prairie, and the Tribune, as its daily, maintained a precarious existence in an old wooden shanty on the northwest corner of Lake and Clark Streets. Messrs. Wheeler, Stewart, and Scripps were the editors. It was burned out, and then located at No. 171 1/2 Lake Street.

In the fall of 1849..... I then formed a partnership with J. Ambrose Wight, then editor of the Prairie Farmer and we bought out The Herald of the Prairies, a religious paper, the organ alike of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of the Northwest..... It was then published on Wells Street, on the corner of the alley between Lake and Randolph streets. We soon moved to 171 Lake Street, next door to the Tribune; and in the rear building, on an old Adams press, the first power press ever brought to the city, we printed our own paper, and also the Tribune; for Messrs. Stewart, Wheeler and Scripps. The press was driven by Emery's horsepower, on which traveled hour by hour, an old black Canadian pony. So far as my interest in the splendid machinery of the Tribune is concerned, that old blind pony ground out its beginnings, tramping on the revolving platform of Emery's horse-power.

The hard times of 1857 - '58 brought the Democratic Press and the Tribune together, and Dr. Ray. J. Medill, John L. Scripps and myself became equal partners with Mr. Cowles as business manager. (2)

"May 22nd of the next year, 1849," says Professor Elias

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Number, June 10, 1897.

(2) Lakeside Classics. Reminiscences of Chicago During Forties and Fifties. pp. 28 - 31. With introduction by Mabel Mc Ilvaine.



Colbert, in a History of the Chicago Tribune, "the office of the Tribune was entirely destroyed by fire, but the loss was nearly covered by an insurance for \$2,100 and publication was resumed two days later. A year later the Tribune began to be prosperous and was enlarged to the dimensions of 28 x 40 inches, and had a daily circulation of 1,120 copies." (1)

An issue of the Tribune of that year, 1850, is still extant and has been copied. The copy shows it to have consisted of four pages, nearly three of which are devoted to a commercial review for the year just closing (December 28, 1850). There is very little news, local or outside, and not more than three or four columns of advertising. There are no editorials, at least in this issue. The Tribune had not yet really become a newspaper.

Within a few years, however, a notable development had taken place. Professor Colbert says further:

In November 1854 they, the publishers T. A. Stewart & Co. began to take the Associated Press despatches, which in those days "did not amount to much, though they were about as good as the best." In January, 1855, the paper was enlarged to ten columns to the page, as conceded by its rival contemporary, The Chicago Democrat, "the largest daily in the west, except one or two in St. Louis." The size was, however, reduced back to its former dimensions under a new management a few months later. (2)

This news service was considered to be "a departure in not only the journalism of Chicago but of the Northwest." (3) The Tribune was in fact the first Western paper to publish telegraphic news from the East. The paper was still, however, not in very good circumstances and a few months afterwards it again changed hands. This time the purchasers were Joseph Medill and Dr. Ray of Galena, Illinois. Mr. James M. Cleary, at present of the advertising staff of the Tribune, in a paper in its history, tells of Mr. Medill's first association with the Tribune.

(1) Chicago and the Northwest. Vol. 2. p. 351.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Andreas, A. L. History of Chicago. Vol. II. p. 89. Google



↑ Turn 9 pages for "22"

In the spring of 1855, Joseph Medill who had been connected with various newspaper enterprises in Ohio, including the foundation of the Cleveland Leader, and Dr. Charles H. Ray who had been editing the Jeffersonian at Galena Illinois, met in Chicago bearing letters of introduction to each other from Horace Greeley. They found that they had much in common and decided to enter the journalistic field in Chicago together. Medill accordingly purchased a third interest in The Tribune and Dr. Ray acquired a fourth interest. The connection of Mr. Medill dates from June 18, 1855. A new era was coming for Chicago and for the country and this was recognized by the men now in control of the paper. The city had increased in population from 16,000 to 80,000 in eight years since the foundation of the Tribune.<sup>(1)</sup>

Chicago then already had six other newspapers besides the Tribune. It was rapidly becoming an important grain and cattle market, however, and seven railroads had already made connection with the lake traffic there. The new proprietors set out to surpass their competitors. Mr. Cleary continues:

The new management put in a steam press, introduced the first copper faced type used in Illinois and improved the news and editorial columns. On July 1, 1858, the Tribune was combined with the Daily Democratic Press which had been founded September 16, 1852 by John L. Scripps and Wm. Bross. The merged papers were published under the name, The Press and Tribune, but in 1860 the name was changed to The Chicago Tribune. An effort was made to publish an evening paper, but was abandoned after eight days. As the result of consolidation John Locke Scripps of The Press became senior editor and so remained until appointed postmaster of Chicago by Lincoln in 1861.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Tribune suffered continuously, however, during the '50's from adverse financial circumstances. Professor Colbert in his History of the Tribune says:

The panic of 1857 played havoc with the finances of both the Tribune and the Democratic Press, and the proprietors concluded to join their forces, this being all the easier as the two papers had occupied almost precisely the same ground politically. The consolidation was the means of effecting a great saving in expenses, but it did not enable the proprietors, Scripps Bross, Spears, Ray, Medill and Cowles, to avert threatened bankruptcy. They were forced to assign in the following

(1) Cleary, J. M. History of Chicago Newspapers 1833-1870.

(2) Ibid.





to better quarters at Dearborn Street and Madison where it has remained to the present day. Dearborn Street has then fast becoming the Park Row of Chicago and by moving to its new site the Tribune was placed in one of the most advantageous positions in the city.

Chicago had now grown to be a city of more than one hundred thousand people and had become the distributing center for the whole Middle West. The prosperity of the city was indicated by the large number of advertisements of wholesale firms in the Tribune which furnished "a reflex of the business of the city with outsiders."<sup>(1)</sup>

By this time the news gathering activities of the paper had grown so great as to require an organization entirely distinct from the editorial end and one in which none of the owners had a share. We read:

Previous to 1866 there was no managing editor for The Tribune, the work which falls to that official being arranged for by consultation between the editor-in-chief and the city editor. It was at first thought that the big staff taken on to handle the news during the war might be cut down materially at the cessation of hostilities, but instead of this the demand for the enlargement and in 1866 the office was in such a shape that the selection of a managing head became vitally necessary.. <sup>(2)</sup>

Managing editors were chosen from the city and reportorial staff and succeeded themselves in rapid succession until 1874 when Samuel J. Medill was placed in control of news-gathering, in which he continued until his death in 1883.

(1) Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. Vol. III. p. 356.

(2) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition, Second section. p. 2.



Dr. Ray ceased to occupy the editorial chair in 1863, and when Mr. Medill succeeded him until 1866, Horace White became editor-in-chief. During his editorship the paper made its first excursion from the ranks of the Republican party, of which something has already been said in a preceding chapter.

The prosperity of the paper at this time, however, is indicated by the fact that in 1868 it moved into a handsome four story building on its present location, and that by 1870 its annual net profits were estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Andreas in his History of Chicago says that it was the most prominent and successful newspaper in the West, always on the popular side of all social and political issues and that throughout it maintained a strong grip on the advertising patronage of the city.<sup>(1)</sup>

The great fire of 1871, which destroyed nearly the whole of the business district of Chicago, destroyed also the plant of the Tribune and necessitated the suspension of publication for two days. We are told that:

The paper of October 9, 1871 describing the ocean of fire that swept over the city was actually half printed with the pressroom in flames. The smoke-grimed editor, Professor Colbert, hastily snatched a copy (the only copy saved) as it fell off the press and fled for his life up Clark Street, between two walls of crimson flame.<sup>(2)</sup>

Temporary quarters, however, were quickly found and with antiquated equipment and press the paper began to print the news of the great disaster. In the following year it moved back to its old location, this time into a building of

(1) Andreas, A. T., History of Chicago. Vol. III. p. 233

(2) Anonymous material in Tribune "morgue". p. 9.



five stories. Mr. Medill became possessed of one hundred and five shares of the capital stock in 1873 and again assumed the position of editor-in-chief. Samuel J. Medill, a younger brother who had become connected with the paper a short time before as Washington correspondent, was made managing editor. Fredrick H. Hall, who later became one of the best known newspaper men in Chicago, was made city editor.

At this time also . . . George P. Upton, who had done much brilliant reporting for the Tribune during the Civil War, became justly famous for his reviews of the musical and dramatic offerings of the then growing city. Mr. Upton is likewise still living in Chicago.

Under Mr. Medill's new regime improvements were continually being made in the mechanical department of the Tribune. Immediately upon his taking over the plant in 1874 new multiple presses were installed. In 1879 a mechanical folder for newspapers invented by Conrad Kahler, foreman of the Tribune press-room, was used for the first time there. In the '80's considerable additions were made to the number and capacity of the presses and late in the '90's the linotype was introduced into the composing room. All these improvements were no more than what was necessary to keep up with the ever increasing circulation of the Tribune.

In . . . Samuel Medill's department, a considerable widening of the news function was attained with the beginning of sport and society reporting in the columns of the Tribune. Samuel Medill was himself an experienced sport writer and he laid the



foundations of what has continued to be a very important department. He also kept up with the very latest happenings all over the local field and taught his staff to fight for the "scoops" which soon became a ruling passion of Chicago's newspaper world.

Probably the greatest of Mr. Samuel Medill's scoops was the publication in 1881 of the Revised Version of the New Testament two days before any other American paper had an inkling of it. A man was sent to Europe for the particular purpose of securing a first copy and, on finding that impossible, returned to New York on the ship with the first consignment of printed volumes from England. He got a copy as the first box was opened on the pier, rushed it to Chicago by train and it was set up on a Saturday night as a sixteen page supplement to the regular Sunday edition of April 2nd.

Shortly after the death of Samuel Medill in 1883 the second period of the Tribune's history came to an end. From 1886 on it was to develop under the leadership of younger men into the great modern newspaper which it is today.

### 3. Third Period.

On the death of . . . Samuel Medill, Robert W. Patterson became managing editor. Mr. Patterson was a son-in-law of Joseph Medill and had become connected with the paper some years previously. Under him the paper was again broadened out. New styles of news writing and presentation were followed, and many special foreign cables were bought. Less space was



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accorded to purely editorial matter, and the Sunday paper was developed into both a Sunday newspaper and a Sunday magazine. The price of the paper which had risen to five cents after the war was reduced to three cents in 1886. So large an increase in circulation resulted that it was further reduced to two cents in 1888 and finally, in 1895, the Tribune led the great dailies in reducing to one cent. It was later raised again to two cents until reduced to its present price in 1910.

Says a Western traveler in 1888:

Chicago journalism, like the city itself, is one of the wonders of the times.... As newspapers, that is, as gatherers of the details of the world's daily history, and its presentation with fulness and skill, they have no equals on the continent.

Editorially, the Chicago newspapers are in no respect inferior to the best published elsewhere in the United States .... Like most Western writers, Chicago editors go the point aimed at by very direct lines and when it is reached no reader has any difficulty in finding out what it is.

Facile princeps among Chicago newspapers in the estimation of the country, though not, perhaps, in that of rival Chicago editors and publishers, is the Tribune. Its history may be said to have begun when Joseph Medill went to Chicago and with John C. Vaughan and Dr. C. H. Ray purchased the Tribune. This was in May 1855. (1)

Again:

The Tribune is the leading journal of Chicago. Editorially it is the strongest, as a purveyor of news it is never behind, and it is the favorite with business men who seek an advertising medium. Its profits are probably a quarter of a million dollars a year. (2)

(1) Z. L. White, Western Journalism. Harper's Magazine, October 1888. Vol. 77. p. 678.

(2) Ibid.



↑ turn six  
pages to "3"

In 1890 Mr. Patterson was called from the position of managing editor to a position as secretary and treasurer of the Tribune Company. Just previously, in 1887, both Mr. Cowles who had been in charge of the business department since the '60's, and Mr. Gross (who had become Lieutenant Governor of Illinois) had both died, and Mr. Medill had by this time become too aged to take charge of all the important business of the Tribune Company. Mr. Patterson was succeeded in the position of Managing Editor by William Van Benthuyzen, a member of the local staff.

Under Mr. Van Benthuyzen the news department of the paper continued to expand, but in 1898 he left the employ of the Tribune company to accept a similar position with the New York World. James Keeley, an Englishman who had begun life as a newsboy in London and who had for twenty years been a member of the Tribune staff, was advanced from city editor to managing editor.

Mr. Keeley quickly made a name for himself and for the paper as a gatherer of news of international importance.

P. C. McFarlane thus tells the story of his first great exploit as a managing editor:

In his first year as managing editor, Keeley gave an example of that alertness to opportunity which makes him Keeley. The little gods of luck and chance also played a part, but the point is that Keeley took advantage on the instant of what the Billikins gave him.

(Ed. Harden, correspondent of the Tribune and World flashes in a thirty word story of the Battle of Manila at 4:30 in the morning, ahead of all other correspondents. The night editor stops the presses just as Keeley steps out to get a drink.)

Keeley, missing the rumble of the presses, dashed back,



↑ back six pages to "27"

Resolutions were adopted protesting against the suppression of The Times. These resolutions were forwarded to President Lincoln, who on the following day, June 4th, rescinded the order of suppression.

Mr. Cook Comments further:

Just how serious the menace to the Tribune was regarded may be judged from the fact that the correspondent of the New York Herald closed his dispatch for the night, "At this hour the Tribune still stands." None were more alive to the danger threatening their property than the owners of this resolute paper. According to reports the old Clark Street rockery opposite the Sherman House and within sound of the clamor of the great assemblage had been transformed into an arsenal, with Colonel Jennison of "jayhawking" notoriety in command. This whilom lieutenant of "Ossawatomie" Brown, during the "Bloody Kansas" days, was endowed by the mass of Republicans with an almost superhuman prowess; and at the same time was a veritable red rag to the Copperhead bull. He was togged in quite the present cowboy fashion; and whenever seen on the street was followed by a crowd of gaping admirers. Armed men, according to rumor, had been quietly smuggled to the lofts of various buildings about the Tribune; and, in case the journalistic stronghold was attacked, on a word from this leader they would strew Clark Street with Copperhead corpses. These reports, however small their foundation, had no doubt a salutary effect on the more timid.

That Colonel Jennison was en rapport with the denizens of a number of upper floors in the neighborhood, there is no manner of doubt. There were human wild beasts to subdue in that vicinage; and, as a hunter who could track the "tiger" to his lair, the Colonel had few equals. (1)

On the conduct of the Tribune during these trying war times a writer in The Tribune has this to say:

The Tribune was as near a cooperative enterprise during these years, 1861 - '68, as could be attained. Dr. Ray, Mr. Medill, Governor Bross, and Mr. Scripps each possessed the veto power on articles for publication. Mr. Cowles, the fifth partner, had charge of the business office... (2)

After weathering the storm of war with prosperity, The Tribune in 1866 moved from its old location on Clark Street

(1). Cook, F. F., Bygone Days in Chicago, Vol VII., P. 158.-'59  
(2). Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1899.



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↑ back one page to "26"

tor in national politics and, following the needs of a rapidly expanding business, it has been incorporated. It was on the road to becoming a modern newspaper. But there was to follow a period during the Civil War and after in which the paper was to meet many vicissitudes while politics were still to the fore and development in other lines took place only slowly.

## 2. The Second Period.

The Tribune continued, as well as it might, throughout the whole Civil War a conspicuous supporter of President Lincoln's administration. Its violent anti-Democratic sentiments were, however, very nearly the cause of its destruction by an angry mob of Southern sympathizers in the year 1863.

On the 2nd of June, General Ambrose F. Burnside, then in command of the military department of the Northwest, including Chicago, ordered the suppression of the Chicago Times, a rival paper to the Tribune and a "notorious copperhead sheet".

As soon as the news of what was to happen spread among the people the strain between the opposing sides became threateningly dense, and with "Copperheadism" most resolutely to the fore; while on every side one heard the threat, which grew with each hour, "if the Times is not allowed to publish, there will be no Tribune." (1)

A mob of Democrats arose and a mass-meeting was held.

While a mass-meeting was in progress outside [the courthouse] another was taking place in one of the courtrooms. Judge Van H. Higgins was at this time a stockholder in the Tribune, and its property was in danger. Largely through his efforts prominent men from both sides had been brought together, and Mayor Sherman was called to the chair. (2)

(1) Lakeside Series. Reminiscences of Chicago During Civil War.  
p. 57.

(2) Ibid. p. 59.



November, and obtained an extension of three years on their indebtedness which, however, was all paid off in the first twenty-one months. (1)

Financial difficulties did not prevent the Tribune from keeping up with the growth of the city. We have the following account of the news gathering activities of the paper just previous to and following the outbreak of the War:

It was in 1855 that The Tribune began to branch out and enlarge its staff. In that year the Board of Trade, after long effort, succeeded in establishing telegraphic service with five other cities, and the market business became such an important feature of news that it grew beyond the power of the city editor to attend to this and the other branches of his work without neglecting some of them. About this time also the Stock-Yards industry assumed prosperous proportions which required the attention of a specially detailed reporter.....

Following this came the breaking out of the War in 1861, and the necessity for an increase of the staff was again prominently in evidence.....

The Tribune met the situation boldly. It meant the outlay of a great deal of money for which no chance of immediate return could be seen, but money was paid out without murmur or stint. A number of reporters were employed to secure the war news, and the city editor became a city editor in reality. Special correspondents were engaged and sent out with the various branches of the Federal Army. The Associated Press service was taken, and in addition to this arrangements were made to get special news by wire from points where neither the press association nor The Tribune were directly represented. Where it was impossible to use the telegraph wires an express service was organized. At one bound The Tribune became a newspaper in the broadest sense of the word. (2)

These news activities brought with them prosperity. A reference to the files of the paper early in 1860 is interesting as showing how the paper was growing. On the front page of the issue of January 5th we find the following:

Our books show that the cash receipts of our job and newspaper establishment for the past year were but little short

- (1) Golbert, Elias M. History of Tribune. in Chicago and Northwest. Vol. II. p. 57.  
(2) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition, June 1897.



of Two Hundred Thousand dollars!

Again further down we read:

Such facts cheer us onward and lead us to hope that we can reach a daily circulation of fifteen thousand and a weekly of forty thousand before the close of the present year.

During the present month it is to be hoped that our friends all over the West will make an united and vigorous effort to extend the circulation of The Press and Tribune. (1)

Professor Colbert says:

The Chicago Tribune - and of course this was true of the other papers of that day - was, previous to the outbreak of the War, a much more primitive affair than the crudest attempt at a newspaper now published in this city. And it would have been so if abundant capital and journalistic talent had been available, which was not the case. There existed neither the demand nor the means for the publication here of what now would be called a good newspaper. There was no wish for such a thing till the southern states undertook to secede, and volunteers began to rush forward to the defense of the Union. Then those of the people who remained at home wanted the news and wanted it at the earliest possible moment.

It was during the years immediately preceding the War that the Tribune became a prominent agitator of the nomination of Lincoln. Lincoln, in fact, always regarded it as "his chief journalistic mouthpiece in the West." Lincoln was, of course, at that time the most prominent illinoian of the Republican faith and the proprietors of the Tribune were quick to think of him as a Presidential possibility and as the leader of the Union forces. They followed him with their best reporter, Mr. Horace White, in his famous tour of Illinois when, in 1858, he met Douglas in joint debate. They were the first to print his speeches in full. Though Lincoln failed to reach the Senatorship which he was then seeking, his supporters were not disheartened. They immediately began to take practical measures towards the furthering of his candidacy for the Republican nomination for President.

we read that:

About the first of December, 1859, Medill had gone to Washington, ostensibly as a Tribune correspondent, but really to promote Lincoln's nomination... Feb. 16, 1860, The Tribune came out editorially for Lincoln, and Medill followed a few days later with a ringing letter from Washington, naming Lincoln as a candidate on whom both conservative and radical could unite.... (2)

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jan. 5. 1860.

(2) Chicago Tribune, Lincoln Centenary Edition. February 1909.



↑ back three pages to "25"

When the Republican convention met in Chicago in the summer of 1860 the editors of the Tribune were prominent in aiding Mr. Lincoln's candidacy in the convention hall. Mr. Medill later said that Dr. Ray, the senior editor of the Tribune, took a very active part in the negotiations with party leaders which lead up to the nomination of Lincoln. It is said that when Lincoln was finally nominated, Dr. Ray wrote an editorial which long remained one of the classics of Chicago journalism.

In 1861 the name Press and Tribune was dropped and the paper became again simply The Chicago Tribune. It has remained under that name ever since. In the following year it was incorporated by the Illinois Legislature, the stockholders being L. L. Scripps, William Bross, Joseph Medill, Charles H. Ray, Alfred Cowles, and William H. Rand. Of these all except Messrs. Medill, Bross, and Cowles withdrew in time, and the ownership of the paper later fell to the estates of these three with a few scattered holdings elsewhere. The capitalization at that time was placed at two hundred shares of a thousand dollars each, which, in spite of an enormously increased valuation has never been increased.

The first period of the Tribune's history closed then with the middle of the Civil War. By that time it had become a large paper in every sense of the word (it was the custom during this period of American journalism to issue papers of enormous size); it had shown itself to be a news gatherer of superior enterprise; it had demonstrated its power as a fac-



learned what had happened, dispatched boys on bicycles to overtake the paper wagons carrying the first editions to the trains and to bring them back, after which, with his coat and vest off, he went to work. On the long-distance telephone he got President Mc Kinley out of bed, gave him the first authentic news of the battle of Manila, and interviewed him upon its significance. He next called under the following order, Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of War, and numerous other important personages in the Government, giving each of them the first news of the victory and securing from each a few sentences about that event with which to embroider Harden's message. It was not only a scoop, but one of the most impressive demonstration of news-publishing sagacity that the country saw during the Spanish-American War. (1)

In the same year The Tribune was forced to suspend publication for the longest period in its existence. This was due to the general strike of the journeymen printers in Chicago in that year. There were no issues for four days.

In the following year (1899) Mr. Medill died and Mr. Patterson succeeded him as editor-in-chief and president of the Tribune company. . . . Alfred Cowles, son of the former secretary and treasurer and business manager, took Mr. Patterson's place as secretary and treasurer of the Company. Mr. Keeley was given practically a free hand in the news department, and in 1903 was appointed publisher as well by Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Keeley's first act as publisher was to engage John T. McCutcheon, who had already made himself quite a reputation as a cartoonist for the Chicago Record-Herald, at a salary which was said to be one thousand dollars a month. He likewise added many new news and entertaining features.

P. C. Mac Farlane  
(1) Collier's, June 28, 1913. - Explaining Keeley.-



The Washington correspondence was continued under the able services and management of Raymond Patterson, a brother of the editor-in-chief.

His second triumph as a publisher of news came in 1906. Mr. McFarlane tells it thus:

Doubtless the supreme exhibition of Keeley's news-handling genius was displayed in his treatment of the Iroquois Theatre fire story, the greatest disaster, so far as mortality is concerned, that ever befell Chicago. The news features of this horrible tragedy - in which more than 600 persons died - were of the most colorful kind. The Tribune's comprehensive story gathered by more than a score of men, and worked into a clear and forceful narrative, was taking shape by ten o'clock on that terrible night. The Tribune first page was to carry one of the greatest news stories in history.

But Keeley walked out of his office, chewing the stump of a cigar, and in unemotional tones gave the city editor the order:

"Put nothing on the first page but names of the dead." Then he added over his shoulder as he retired: "People don't care about descriptions or incidents. What they want is names - to know who is dead!"

So the descriptive lead went on the second page ... When the paper came out thus, the other editors quickly realized that they had been beaten. (1)

Mr. Patterson died in 1910 and Mr. Keeley became even more a dominant factor in the publishing of the Tribune. He began immediately to put into effect some of his ideas of personal service to the readers and advertisers of the paper, thus making a distinct contribution to journalism:

He engaged Miss Lillian Russel at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year to give beauty hints to women and to answer personal queries as to the best ways of preserving health and beauty. In 1912 he succeeded also in securing the services of Dr. W. A. Evans, whose term as Health Commissioner of the city had just expired, to conduct a column on "How to Keep Well".

(1) P. C. McFarlane, Explaining Keeley. - Collier's, June 28, 1913.



on the editorial page. To these features he added many others such as The Tribune Law department, "Marion Harland's Helping Hand", and "The Tribune Cook Book". These departments remain as conspicuous features of the Tribune.

Of these features he said:

I believe, however, that the real newspaper has outgrown the looking-glass stage as the sole object of its existence. The big development of the modern newspaper will be along lines of personal service..... It must enter into the everyday life of its readers and, like the parish priest, be guide, counsellor, and friend. I have often thought that a newspaper can most closely realize its real mission the nearer it comes to attaining the ideals of the parish priest and the clergyman in his ministrations to his flock. (1)

And again:

Specialization and personal service are just as necessary and potent in the advertising end of the newspaper business as in the editorial department. (2)

In 1911 — 1912 he pushed vigorously in the editorial and news columns of the Tribune and likewise the campaign for the ousting of William L. Lorimer of Illinois from the United States Senate. (3) In the Presidential campaign of that latter year he was perhaps the strongest journalistic champion of Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive party.

It was likewise in 1912 under Mr. Keeley's management that the Tribune assumed the proud title of "The World's Greatest Newspaper."

In 1914 Mr. Keeley left the Tribune to become editor of the Chicago Herald. Mr. E. S. Beck, the ranking member of the staff, succeeded him as general manager of the Tribune. Messrs. Rutherford R. McCormick and Joseph Medill Patterson,

(1) James Keeley. Address on "Newspaper Work". Nov. 26, '12. Before Students in Course in Journalism, De Paul University.

(2) Ibid.

(3) See Appendix.



grandsons of Mr. Medill, became actively concerned in the affairs of The Tribune Company. Mr. McCormick is today president and Treasurer of the company; Mr. Patterson is vice-president and secretary. In all matters affecting the business or policy of the paper they sign themselves as "editors and proprietors." The majority of stock is still held by the Medill estate.



## CHAPTER III

### Editor's Ideas and Ideals

#### 1. Journalistic Conceptions.

Joseph Medill left behind two statements which, while both general in nature, will probably give some clue to his general policy in the conduct of the Tribune. The following statement from the prospectus of the Tribune for 1875 was published in its advertising columns on Christmas Day, 1874:

The Chicago Tribune under the guidance of its former editor, has resumed its old position at the head of Republican journals, and will do battle for the true principles of free government, and for a purified and honest administration of National, State and Municipal affairs.

While giving the Republican party a cordial and earnest support in all wise measures and to all fit candidates, The Tribune will never be the organ of any individual, faction or ism, nor will it cease to combat oppressive monopolies or fail to expose and denounce all corrupt schemes for plundering the Treasury or the people. It will wage perpetual war on the lobby-rings which prowl around the halls of legislation in quest of spoil.

In his will Medill made a further statement, this time more specific, concerning his ideals for the paper. He said:

I want the Tribune to continue to be after I am gone, as it has been under my direction, an advocate of political and moral progress, and in all things to follow the line of common sense...

Whatever may have been the lofty ideals as well as the practical principles which he laid down for the conduct of the Tribune it is certain that he never desired it to have other than a general appeal. While almost always a partisan paper, the Tribune has never been a class paper.

The principle of business success is, however, observable in the Tribune from the earliest issues. In this particular the Tribune has always followed the fashion of the times. In all



of the early volumes approximately one-half of the front page is devoted to commercial announcements. Along in the '70's we may observe among them quack and patent medicine advertisements, some of these then appearing as reading notices on the editorial page.

That he was not in sympathy with the more sensational methods of newsgathering inaugurated in Chicago during the '70's is, however, indicated by Mr. Cook in his story of a "scoop" for the Times. Relative to Mr. Medill he says:

The fact is "Uncle Joe", as we all loved to call him, had come into the newspaper business before the "scoop" mania became epidemic and his age (50 years) now held him immune.<sup>(1)</sup>

In fact we may say that Mr. Medill probably acquired, with incidental modifications in the matter of progressive political thought, his ideas of journalism from the ante-bellum period. The building up of the paper along modern lines in the decade before his death was probably in other hands than his. Of the journalistic atmosphere in which he early breathed we have the following picture:

The newspaper then was not published to furnish news but ideas. The small amount of news furnished was intended merely to give force and effect to the editorial utterances. The paper seldom contained more than one editorial in each issue, and in a majority of cases, the article was written by the local politician whose native sense and acquired education made him the most prominent figure in his party. The editorial was not written hurriedly and neither was it written in the style of a freshman or sophomore. It was the result of the same study and research which characterizes the minister in the preparation of his sermon. The principles of government, the action of Congress and the state legislature were discussed in a manner that showed the development

(1) F. F. Cook. Bygone Days in Chicago. p. 51.



of great study and profound thought. This one article was called the "leader" and the country paper of an et-war days would under no consideration go to press without its "leader". If the politician had not written one and the editor could not, there was recourse to the scissors and one of the exchanges published farthest away. Seldom was the editorial page graced with more than one article. At times of great political excitement more than the usual amount of space was devoted to the discussion of political matters, but it required a presidential or a gubernatorial election to bring this about.....

There was practically no local news. A matter which now would be served up in a column in any newspaper would then be disposed of in half a dozen lines.(1)

There is reason to believe that until his dying day Medill saw in the newspaper a medium for news, perhaps, but for important ideas as well.

2. Political Principles.  
Of Medill it was said: "He is Republican only in presidential years." Then no one doubted his constant allegiance to the Republican party. On state and local issues he picked and chose as he willed. This was in accordance with his policy as announced in the prospectus of 1875. It will give the Republican party "a cordial and earnest support" only "in all wise measures and to all fit candidates." For the rest it binds itself only to the principle of honest government in city, state and nation.

In fact Mr. Snively says of him:

The state has had no more independent journalist than Mr. Medill. As a general thing he was always to be found in line with his party. The most notable example when he saw his duty to be cut loose from his party fetters was in (2) 1869 independent delegate for the constitutional convention.

(1) Snively, Hon. E. A. Newspapers and Newspapermen in Illinois. In the proceedings of the Illinois State Historical Society. 1904. p. 6.

(2) Op. cit. Idem.



Mr. Medill's most significant bit of party heresy was, however, his position on the tariff. In a speech before the convention of the American Agricultural Association in Chicago in 1882 he said:

I was brought up on high tariff in early life, in the school of Henry Clay, and believed his teachings that a high tax on consumers benefited farmers..... In the course of years, by further reflection, reading and observation, I found myself changing in opinion as to the benefits of a system of high taxes levied upon imports as a good thing for the American people and especially farmers.

I underestimate the truth when I say that the farmers of the West and the planters of the South are charged 500 millions of dollars a year on their goods for the profit of protected Eastern manufacturers more than is fair or necessary, on the principle of live and let live.<sup>(1)</sup>

Since he said in the same speech that "the tariff is the largest of all American political and economical questions" it may be judged just how far Mr. Medill's political "heterodoxy" went on occasion.

Nevertheless just how high his party feeling did run likewise on occasion may be seen from a paragraph in his will. In that instrument he said:

I desire the Tribune as a party organ never to be the supporter of that party which sought to destroy the American Union, or that exalts the state above the nation.<sup>(2)</sup>

A reference to the history of the Tribune under his editorship reveals in summary the following political principles:

A supporter of emancipation, Congressional reconstruction, civil service reform, a single presidential term of six years, local self government, high license and local

(1) Medill, Joseph. *The Tariff*. Pamphlet 1884.

(2) From a facsimile in the office of the editors and proprietors of the Tribune.



option on the liquor question, protection of the interests of the farmers.

An opponent of slavery, President Johnson's policies, "greenbackism", a protective tariff and the silver standard.

What is of timely interest at the present time is to know that in 1860 he favored the annexation of Mexico.

### 3. Other Principles.

Of his principles other than political little really can be discovered. On social and economic subjects it is apparent that he was progressive rather than radical or reactionary.

Of his moral and religious principles it may be said that, a deeply religious and moral man personally, he undoubtedly carried this highly socialized and reverent attitude over into the editorial columns of the Tribune.

### 4. Range of Interests.

Medill came both too late and too early into journalism to contribute much that is distinctive to the principles and methods of the profession. He did not discover any new ways of presenting the news or feature material as did Dana and others. His work likewise practically came to an end previous to the era of modern journalism of the '90's. But he did contribute something to the idea of the all inclusiveness of modern journalism. To his mind anything which was likely to prove interesting or valuable must have been considered worth publishing. One who presumably knew him both personally and of position in journalism says of him:

It has been customary to class Mr. Medill with Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett the elder, Samuel Bowles, Henry J. Raymond and Charles A. Dana. True, he was contemporary



with them and survived all of them, except Dana, more than twenty years, but he differed very much from them in comparison of the vast powers, interests and opportunities of modern journalism. There was a vividness in the interest he took in all affairs of mankind, which was confined in Greeley's case to politics and agriculture, in Bennet's to news sensations, and in Bowles' to politics, in Raymond's to politics and literature, and in Dana's to political antagonisms and mordant English. (1)

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.



## CHAPTER IV

### Medill's Editorial Policy

#### 1. Medill's Influence.

Medill's greatest influence in the management of the Tribune is shown on the editorial page during the second period of its history (Chapter II). It has been thought wise, therefore, to study the editorial page in 1875 and in following years, in order to discover its importance and the method of its conduct during the period in which Mr. Medill exercised most direct control over it.

At this time (1875) The Tribune had grown to eight pages. The editorial page was then placed, as it is still according to custom with papers of moderate size, on the fourth page. During Mr. Medill's life the page was occupied almost entirely with editorials. Particularly is this true of the period of 1875 and thereabouts when frequently the editorial columns used to "spill over" even to the following columns of the next page. It is very noticeable, however, that the relative importance of the editorial page declined steadily even during Mr. Medill's active managership. In the sixties there were three or four of the columns of the editorial page devoted to reading matter compared with twelve or fourteen columns for the whole paper. In 1875 there were perhaps seven or eight in a paper of forty columns of reading matter. In the '80's there was less; and in the '90's there were five columns at most in a paper which even contained some seventy or eighty columns of reading matter.

The subjects of his editorials in the Tribune were drawn



from almost every conceivable source.

This wide range of ideas is explained by a tribute to Mr. Medill at the time of his death:

...An enormous reader, he had ideas about everything and he wanted to express those ideas. He was primarily a writer and an inspirer of writing, and he was better in this than in executive work. I was connected with the Tribune under him for nineteen years and knew his habits and peculiarities. He would come into the editorial rooms and talk away to his editorial writers about the events of the day and fill them full of his thoughts. His stamp was placed over the entire editorial page of the paper. Of course he had his personal vagaries, and he rode many hobbies vigorously, one after the other. But the main thing to point out about his life was the breadth of his ideas and their immense scope. (1)

## 2. Sources and Kinds.

Current events and the day's news are of course the most prolific sources. In 1875, in fact, all the editorial paragraphs are practically mere resumes of current news. Live issues are, of course, dealt with largely in the longer and "heavier" editorials.

Comment on the seasons is more rare. The Tribune in 1875 greets Washington's Birthday in this wise:

"Today being Washington's Birthday, is not the publication of the Chicago Times a national insult?"

The appearance of a new edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica is commented upon favorably in the issue of March 11.

Practically every kind of editorial can be noted between the first of January 1875 and the last of April. There might be some doubt, however, as to the proper classification of the editorials of useful information and practical advice noted

(1) Harry Scovill in Chicago Times Herald, March 17, 1899.



in the issues of April 23 and 25.

Taking the files of May-August of the same year (1875) however, various purposes and methods in editorial writing may be noticed. Of these perhaps interpretation and argument are most common. Persuasion through emotional appeal is rather rare. The eloquence and fire of such rather infrequent outbursts may be judged easily, however, from the following:

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Shall our elections be controlled by a gang of a few hundred professional criminals who have recently undertaken to run the city, control the courts and juries, determine official appointments and give immunity to crime? Is the City Government to pass into the hands of these people, not only indirectly but directly? Is the mayor to be selected by the chiefs of the slums, and is an election to the common Council to be decided over the faro-table?.....

Let, therefore, every man who favors a pure and an honest City Government, go to the meeting tonight. (1)

This appeal from an ordinarily solid and purely logical editor, who, but a few years before had been Mayor of the city, must have been effective indeed.

Denunciation, sarcasm, and abuse of political opponents are common in 1875 and are used in a manner which would now be considered unpardonable. For instance, in the issue of May 2 under the heading of "Political Notes", we find the following:

The Vicksburg Herald remarks, by the Powers Eternal, that John B. Gordon is not the foremost of Southern statesmen, and cannot be while such men as Jefferson Davis and Robert M. T. Hunter live. The word "statesman" in this connection is used, we suppose, in the same sense as it was by Boss Tweed, when he registered his name and calling in the prison book of Blackwell's Island.

That is not only mean; it might be considered libelous. Whether Mr. Medill wrote that paragrph we do not know; but he

(1) Chicago Tribune, May 6, 1875.



did allow it, and many others of its kind, to find a place on the editorial page of his paper.

Within less than ten years, however, Mr. Medill, together with the great mass of the Northern people was willing to speak more kindly of his late foes. In startling contrast to the paragraph quoted above we find in 1882 the following:

Mr. Grady of Atlanta, Ga., is a smart editor and a whole-souled man, and we hope he may live to see his glowing picture of the "New South" a glowing reality.

That the page was not without its lighter and more human touches is shown by the following sentences which close an un-headed paragraph:

We wish to personally assure Mrs. Westbrook [a prominent woman suffragist of the time] that we consider her to be not only the handsomest, but the best dressed woman in the world. If she happens to peruse this paragraph, The Tribune staff will be spared from the general slaughter, but the rest of mankind will find it, we fear, a sanguinary centennial. (1)

Eulogy is used quite more frequently than is the case today.

### 3. Style.

Styles in editorial headings have probably changed very little since the beginning of journalism. Certainly we find Mr. Medill's headings in 1875 little different from those in use today. They usually extend across the column and consist merely of a phrase -- never are they expanded into a sentence; and rarely do they exceed a single line.

As to originality and attractiveness an example or so will suffice:

(1) Chicago Tribune, July 3, 1875.



## Five Millions' Worth of Deficiencies.

### The Danger of New York

#### Brainial Food.

Great developments in the Readableness of editorials must have taken place during Mr. Medill's connection with the Tribune. In the sixties we find the editorials interminably long and minute. In 1875 we find them much better in structure, at least, if not in style.

By 1887 with the growth of modern journalistic standards, the style had become simple and uninvolved and the subject matter had lost its partisan character. Before Mr. Medill's death the editorials, except for the broad column, had become practically in style and form what they are today.

In 1875, however, we rarely find an editorial occupying more than half a column. Even the paragraphs are rarely over one hundred and fifty words in length. The progress of the editorial as a whole, however, is frequently cluttered up with long quotations and statistics.

Beginnings and conclusions are nevertheless usually effective. The beginning is quite generally a summary of the news story, somewhat in the present style of the New York Evening Post. Occasionally other conventional methods of editorial beginnings are resorted to. The ending is quite generally a significant statement which rounds out the thought and gives point to the expression of opinion.

In style we may notice a great evolution. The paper of the sixties and seventies had no great tendency toward



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clearness and ease of reading. Ideas were buried in the midst of the sentence and the sentences themselves were grammatically involved. It was then emphatically a paper for leisurely readers. The editorials had both force and dignity but did little to amuse. We notice only occasional gleams of humor and scarcely any pathos.

Of good taste in general we continue to find The Tribune sometimes seriously lacking, when discussing its political opponents. The following is a flagrant example:

The Cincinnati Enquirer has broken out in a new column of original facetiae, headed "Sour Grapes", so called probably, on account of its ass-idity.

This is poor wit judged by modern standards; but it is probable that Mr. Medill allowed his paper to indulge in it no more than did the other papers of the time. But The Tribune never handled its opponents with gloves on, and its personal attacks under the guise of discussion of political questions might have been quite often cause for rancor.

Sentence and paragraph forms tend to complexity, periodicity and balance -- all of which are used rather effectively. The diction in the seventies is still rather wordy, not popular, and tends in places to what would now be called triteness. Latinisms and Gallicisms are frequent. Irony and innuendo are used quite frequently; but similes, metaphors and the other "ornaments" of style, are most often lacking.

#### 4. Policy.

The editorial policy of The Tribune has never been to up-



hold a class, a denomination, or an interest. While quite obviously biased in its political opinions, it nevertheless seems to be fair and accurate in other matters. On certain issues such as slavery, municipal reform, and the like it has always taken a rather moral stand; but it has never flaunted its morality. It has apparently always been sincere and consistent in spite of accusations to the contrary. Cold and critical, however, it has been always. Personal in its early days, frequently making use of the editorial "we" it had become largely impersonal in its comments even as early as 1875.

The editorial policy of The Tribune may be said to be epitomized in this statement from the pen of Mr. Cleary:

Although The Tribune has had considerable democratic antecedents as is indicated by the influence of Horace Greeley in bringing its founders together; in the support of Horace Greeley for the presidency and in the newspaper titles "Chicago Democrat, Democratic Press, Jeffersonian, which are connected with its history, still since October 9, 1874, when Joseph Medill took complete charge of the paper it has been guided by the following statement which he published at that time:

"The Tribune hereafter will be as it formerly was under my direction an independent republican journal. It will be the organ of no man, however high, no clique or ring, however influential, no faction, however fanatical or demonstrative. Looking at the individual composition of the two parts, and their respective records and underlying principles, I cannot hesitate to give the decided preference to the republican party. Hence The Tribune will be conducted as a republican journal." (1)

That largely sets forth the principles by which the editorial policy of The Tribune is apparently guided today.

(1) Cleary, J. M. Paper read before the advertising staff of the Tribune.



## CHAPTER V

### News Policy of the Tribune

#### 1. Medill's Part.

In spite of his impressive last words, Joseph Medill was not himself a newsgatherer. True, he acted in a managerial capacity over both the news and business ends of the Tribune for some time after he bought an interest in it, but when newsgathering began to become an important feature of the journalism of the period these duties were delegated to others. Mr. Medill himself said as much shortly before his death:

I can't say that I ever did anything very startling. The fact is, I was not that kind of a reporter. I was a plain, rather steady-going sort of chap, and my best hold was on descriptive writing, but my brother Sam was the boy's scooper. Poor fellow! If he were alive he could give you many a story of dare-devil deeds done in the newspaper line. He was fond of that kind of work, and took delight in taking hard tasks and then regaling his listeners afterwards with his stories. (1)

The reporter of these reminiscences likewise tells of Mr. Medill's attitude toward the executive side of newsgathering.

Yet as a managing editor Mr. Medill did not consider himself a success. He disliked the details of "make-up" and the minutia involved in the work of such a position. He was known, though, as one of the best "exchange" editors the country has ever known. He possessed a happy faculty of picking up the queer and interesting things that float about in newspapers or books and reproducing them. His intuition as to what these good things were was remarkable and gave him a great reputation in that line. (2)

With so much of his work confined to the editorial page and the exchanges, the numerous "scoops" which have given the Tribune a great reputation in the news field show no trace of his

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.

(2) Ibid.



effort. It is said that the Tribune was once scooped on information furnished by Mr. Medill himself. <sup>(1)</sup> He was not able to bring himself to the point of view of the newer and more strenuous journalism even in its beginnings in the '70's. We get this exemplified in a biographical note published at the time of his death:

Mr. Medill in those days rarely left the city but what he would say to Sam:

"Now, Sam, eight pages tomorrow morning, big type, set in minion."

Sam had a bigger nose for all-round news than Joseph, and he liked a big paper and small type. As soon as he was sure his brother was gone he would go to the foreman and say:

"Now, Mr. Sullivan, twelve pages tomorrow and all non-pareil."

He rarely gave such an order but what news would develop for that space or a big rush of ads come, and Mr. Medill would return home unable to protest at disobedience of his orders; <sup>(2)</sup>

Again by this:

Mr. Medill was a meddler in the affairs of his journal. This is not to be considered in any offensive sense. Before matters were systematized in the Tribune office as they are now Mr. Medill's appearance there used to be regarded the same as that of a bull in a china-shop. For instance: Mr. Medill's orders had been given out and obeyed. The editorial page was ready. Everything had been cleared for the news features when Mr. Medill would walk in with an armful of clippings and communications from "old friends" to whom he could not say no, and throw them on the desk of the managing editor. For a while the managing editor gave in and revamped the paper to accomodate Mr. Medill, but the time came when fast mails had to be made and news accumulated, and then the managing editor was forced to say in explanation of the nonappearance of the articles that he had lost them. Mr. Medill accepted these explanations good-naturedly and continued to unload. <sup>(3)</sup>

While emphasizing, then, the fact that his connection with the Tribune continued to be almost purely editorial, we still have evidence of some slight influence on its news policy.

(1) W. F. Cook, Bygone Days in Chicago, p. 55.

(2) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899;

(3) Ibid.



For instance, there is on unsupported authority the statement that one of the chief characteristics of Joseph Medill was that he sought to prevent the publication of any news that he did not believe to be actually true. <sup>(1)</sup> And again we are given an inkling of the news policy of the paper during Mr. Medill's life from the statement of a writer on "Western Journalism":

But the Tribune is not the only great newspaper in Chicago. There are several others which are its worthy rivals. The Times for a great many years was a sharp competitor of the Tribune in the collection and publication of the news, although not as careful as to the quality of it. <sup>(2)</sup>

The only definition of news, however, from a member of the Tribune staff came in 1913 from James Keeley, then general Manager, in the response to a query from Collier's Weekly. It reads:

Anything that happens is news but it does not follow that everything that happens should be printed. - <sup>(3)</sup>

## 2. Scoops.

It is well not to forget, however, that while The Tribune, (due no doubt as much to the necessity of following the more advanced East as to anything else,) has contributed nothing particularly to the style of newspaper writing or to newspaper ethics, it has always pursued from its earliest days a vigorous news policy. A member of the Tribune staff <sup>(4)</sup> speaks of a "scoop" as early as 1849 and he thus summarizes

(1) Anonymous material in The Tribune "morgue".

(2) Z. L. White. Harper's Magazine. October 1888. Vol. p.

(3) Collier's. April 26, 1913. "What is News".

(4) Mr. James M. Cleary, in paper before Advertising Staff.



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the various triumphs which The Tribune, in what to him has always been its dominant role, has attained:

It has always been above all else a newspaper. Geo.P. Upton, who is still on the staff of The Tribune, won much fame for the paper during the Civil War by his scoops on the capture of Island No. 10 and other battles.

In 1864, The Tribune exposed a plot to liberate 9,000 Confederate prisoners from Camp Douglas. In 1881 it achieved one of the world's greatest scoops by printing in full and in advance the text of the new testament as revised by the London committee for publication in that city.

In 1895 it published in advance the decision of the United States Supreme Court knocking out the income tax.

In 1898 it scooped the world and even the United States Government on a story of Dewey's Victory at Manilla Bay.

In 1905 it had a scoop on the fall of Port Arthur and gave the first news of John R. Walsh bank failure.

In 1906 it trailed to Morocco, arrested and brought back to Chicago the bank wrecker, Paul O. Stensland, and printed the correspondence between Roosevelt and the Storers which caused an international sensation.

Some of these scoops will be treated in detail later on. The more important ones can, of course, be attributed to James Keeley, though the institutional character of The Tribune's newsgathering activities must be emphasized. It has been the staff of the Tribune rather than any one man which has given the paper its reputation as a newsgatherer.

### 3. News Sources.

Mr. Medill's slight connection with this part of the newspaper's activity has been mentioned. We can trace back to the news content of the Tribune in 1860 and '61, when he was in closer control of the news columns, however, and find that the kinds of news treated then differed very little from



what they were with the exception of sports and society ( which are to be ascribed to his brother Samuel ), all the rest of his life. For instance in the issue of July 1, 1861, we find war correspondence, items from Washington, New York, Baltimore and St. Louis, news from Europe by the latest steamer, "political intelligence", two columns of notices of local happenings and then a page devoted to monetary, commercial, and market affairs. Nearly forty years later on December 31, 1900, (shortly after Mr. Medill's death) we find the summary of news on the front page divided between Domestic, Local, Political, Foreign (including the Boer War), Washington, New York, Trade and Industry and as a new feature, Sporting. While the style of news writing and news presentation had changed enormously in the interval, the essential character of the news had not.

The means of gathering news and the sources do not seem to have developed greatly either in the interval. In 1861 the Tribune had the services of special correspondents with the armies, the use of the special dispatches of the New York Tribune, Times, World and Herald, (a privilege which seems to have been paid for), special correspondents in Washington and other important cities, special market quotations by telegraph and the general service of the Associated Press, such as it was.

Locally it is evident that there were reporters employed who visited regularly the police and fire stations, the railway offices, the stockyards, the courthouse and educational centers as well as military headquarters. In addition there



seems to have been a large voluntary news source in the churches and bookstores.

The means of securing news and its sources likewise do not seem to have expanded much, except in the bulk of the material secured, during the forty years' interval or even later.

#### 4. News Presentation.

In the matter of the writing and the presentation of the news, however, a great development took place during those forty years, and has proceeded even further in the fifteen years or more since Mr. Medill's death. For instance, while the columns of war news in 1861 were sometimes headed with as many as nine or ten decks which reached down nearly half the page, the headline itself never crossed the column line. The "story" itself then scarcely ever ran over half a column and was for the most part mere scattered items told in the briefest possible style and with no visible connection with one another. Any such thing as a complete news story of one event seems to have been unknown either for the telegraph or local news.

While the most important news occupied a prominent place on the front page and "The City" occupied two columns on the last page, other news, though published on the front page, received scant attention indeed from the headline writer. European news in general gets only a two-deck, ten point head  
III.  
and the war correspondence from Cairo, though it fills a



large part of both the first and second columns on the front page, has a very small heading.

It is interesting to note that the minutes of the board of education, published as they were written, take up a whole column on the last page, while "Monetary", "Commercial", and "Marine" news, with the three columns between them, get more proportional importance than at any time before and after.

There is available, in Andreas's History of Cook County, (Illinois) a copy of the oldest extant edition of the Tribune, the news columns of which are even more typical of the early times. It was issued December 28, 1850, some years before Mr. Medill had any connection with the Tribune, and is devoted largely to an annual review of the commerce of the city. On the third and fourth pages, however, "New York" gets nearly half a column and "Washington" nearly a quarter, while the city is accorded two. But even then New York markets get as much as a stickful.

The evolution of news presentation can best be traced by describing the headlines in which the successive scoops mentioned on a preceding page were played up. In 1861, when much war news was coming in, we find many stories labelled merely "News by Telegraph" or "Very Important", followed below perhaps, by an index of the items in type of various sizes. But the "make-up" was invariably the same regardless of the news.

While the printing of the first revised copy of the New Testament in 1881 was properly a magazine section "scoop",



still it is interesting to notice the news presentation in connection with such enterprise. The news is still largely classified under its source and the headlines are consequently mere labels. But each story occupies much more space and the paper <sup>has</sup> now grown to twelve pages.

A great development in news presentation took place in the late '80's and by 1895, at the time of the income tax "scoop" the bulletin head had largely displaced the label and the conventional three or four decks of the modern day newspaper had been used, the deck being set in after the first line.

It is necessary to wait for the news of the Spanish American war, however, before the "banner" head appears. Ordinary war news was then proclaimed in two column heads with very black type and, when the full news of the battle of Manila came in 1898, it was put in banner heads across the page. Needless to say, the bulletin had completely displaced the label, and by this time the top deck occupied two lines and was of the drop line order. News cuts which had begun to be used back in the '80's were now used very plentifully.

Since that time the Tribune has used its banner heads consistently on all scoops and today even the daily news is thus featured. A manifold increase in the size of type is to be noticed. Throughout Mr. Medill's career, however, the style of the headlines remained entirely conservative, though <sup>on</sup> partisan matters they were apt to take on an



editorialized tinge.

#### 4. Structure of Story.

In the latter of the structure of the news story a great development took place during the lifetime of Mr. Medill. In his early days on the Tribune special correspondence rarely took over half a column and consisted mostly of unconnected items. Separate stories never took more than a paragraph or two. Local news was practically all items under a general head. This gave little opportunity for the lead, though once or twice it may be observed couched more or less in the modern conventional style. More often, however, the story starts off with a personal observation. The body of the story and the end (where the article has any unity at all) are generally fairly well written.

Much editorial sentiment and the use of "we" and "our" runs through these early stories. There is much of what would now be termed "country" style, and many phrases are used which now would not be considered good journalistic English. Little attention is paid to the demands of rapid reading, though the paragraphs, being mere items, are quite generally short. There is no particular color or emotional appeal other than what is obvious and direct in the editorialized relations of fact. Great zeal and a certain amount of triteness and wordiness are quite evident.



In contrast to this the most up-to-date journalist would have no quarrel to make with the news stories presented in the Tribune near the close of Mr. Medill's life. They indicate a high degree of skill in every detail. News<sup>mem</sup> were directly in charge of the news service.

In striking contrast to these early stories is the style of the scoops of the Tribune in the '90's. The income tax scoop is from the paper of April 6, 1895 and reads:

"Washington, D.C., April 5. - (Special) - The United States Supreme Court has shot the income tax law full of holes. The decision has been completed and put in type and only awaits formal ratification at the consultation when held at noon tomorrow.

The Manila Bay scoop of May 1, 1898 reads:

Hong Kong, China, Saturday afternoon, April 30. (Copyright, 1898, by the Press Publishing Company, New York World.) Commander Dewey's American squadron is in sight of Manila. The fleet has already captured four Spanish prizes. The Spanish warships, instead of giving battle, are in hiding. They have not coal enough to permit them to escape.

This is quite modern in tone; and it is worth noticing that stories themselves not only occupy several columns but are embroidered in other columns by every other fact conceivable, which might relate to the subject. As was said before, news cuts in connection with these stories are used in profusion.

Since then the Tribune has had many "scoops" and with another war, has begun to use banner heads daily. It is a conservative (not "yellow") journal, with a sensational presentation of the news.



## CHAPTER VI

### Entertainment and Advice

#### 1. Entertainment.

The Chicago Tribune has never, for any reasons of newspaper propriety or otherwise, refused to use entertaining (not news) matter in its columns. The tendency is first distinctly noticeable, however, about 1885 when the large Sunday paper first came into prominence. For instance in the issue of March 1 of that year (which was a twenty-four page paper) we notice that fourteen out of the ninety-eight columns devoted to reading matter are of a purely entertaining sort. On the other hand, we notice that at the present time, January 1916, counting only roughly by pages regardless of size, that probably at least a third of the Tribune's Sunday edition was entertaining matter pure and simple. It is probable, of course, that much of this development has taken place at a considerable time after Mr. Medill's death, but that he did not object to verse, fiction or illustrations we know well.

In the regular week-day editions the proportion of entertaining matter has, of course, always been less, though the human interest story has never been eschewed. On Monday, March 2, 1885 we find only four columns out of fifty-six devoted to entertaining matter. The proportion is much larger in the regular twenty or twenty-four page paper today.

A striking difference, however, is to be observed in the prominence given these features thirty years ago and today. In 1885 the entertaining features were invariably



buried in the news columns, or at least, were never allowed to escape from them. Rarely were they illustrated and even then the reading matter was interspersed with the smallest and sorriest of wood-cuts. Compared with the illustrations stretching down the page and done in different colored inks which now constitutes a considerable part of the entertainment sections they seem to be impossible at any time in the history of the Tribune.

For the entertainment features in the modern Sunday Tribune are not hidden. They occupy three full sections of the paper and are the features which are most relied upon to sell the paper. It seems impossible that such a change in the methods of journalism should have taken place in less than a generation!

The paper of 1885 seems to have had fully as much "human-interest" (even if it was largely gossip) scattered through its columns as the modern edition of the Tribune. These short paragraphs were bright and interesting, consisting to a large extent of anecdotes either of politicians or of cases in the Police Court. They had in them as little news value as is found in the modern story of the same kind.

There seems to have been no objection to publishing fiction in the news columns even as far back as 1885. In the modern Sunday paper it is usually taken care of in a separate Sunday fiction magazine which is issued semi-monthly. The first installment of a serial appeared alongside news from Europe in the issue of March 1st, 1885.



A few descriptive essays -- practically all clippings from other papers -- appear in 1885. These are never, however, over a half column in length. At the present time (January 1916) the Tribune is using syndicated material of this kind which is given in full with occasional pictures.

Of verse the paper of 1885 used nearly a column in its Sunday edition, generally under the heading "Verse of the Period". In the course of a period covering several months, however, of the present year the writer has not observed any verse being used in the modern metropolitan daily.

The dozen more-or-less ludicrous wood cuts mentioned above, illustrating a feature article on rink skating, are the only evidences of this period of entertaining readers which can be found (even in the Sunday paper) in 1885. The cartoon which has been used so effectively in the Tribune of later years, especially when penned by the great John T. McCutcheon himself, is still lacking in the paper of a generation ago. Illustrations of all kinds, indeed, (except the crude ones found occasionally in the Sunday papers) were then lacking.

Of recent years the Tribune has, perhaps, taken a long lead in providing matter which was purely and simply entertaining for its readers. While in the daily paper this department is rather subordinate -- occupying in fact considerably less space than the department of practical advice and useful information -- still it is observable to a considerable extent even there. It cannot be said that it is not an important



part of the modern paper.

## 2. Advice.

The function of the newspaper as a personal advisor to its readers and patrons, however, is so modern that Mr. Medill is not likely to have had any ideas on the subject. To the influence of Mr. Kelley in the early years of the century is undoubtedly due the pre-eminence which the Tribune holds in this field today.

There is to be observed, however, back as far as 1834 a department relating to "The Farm and Garden", which, while relating the news of Springfield of interest to farmers, likewise gave local discussions of the problems of crops and seasons.

In the newspaper of March 1835, we find that Mr. Medill allows a half column to fashions - but that that is all. Even this is clipped.

It should be said of the fashion notes here mentioned, however, that the interests of women readers even at that time were fairly well considered. The article is placed under a head which was quite large for the time and is next to the illustrated feature article.

In striking contrast, of course, is the large amount of personal advice, both in articles and in answers to correspondents printed in the daily Tribune of today, which includes medical, financial, legal, etiquette, personal beauty, recipes, fashions and the like. At least one tenth of the reading matter of the Daily Tribune consists either of articles of advice or of answers to correspondents.



## CHAPTER VII

### The Sunday Paper

#### 1. As a Newspaper.

The Civil War, which was responsible for much in the development of the Tribune and of American journalism in general, was responsible also, according to the most reliable sources, for the Sunday Tribune. The publication of a Sunday issue was made only after the rush of war news became so great that it was impossible to keep it over from Saturday to Monday, and then not without great hesitation. Says a writer in the Jubilee Edition:

It must be noted that The Tribune did not have the temerity to say that its first Sunday issue was exclusively a Sunday paper. While it is true that the first page bore the words "Chicago, Sunday, May 26, 1861," yet on the third page is found the words "Monday, May 27, 1861," which would seem to indicate that the proprietors of the paper had no desire to rashly awaken the hostility of that portion of its readers who believed in a strict observance of the Sabbath day, and to this extent there was a certain compromise. (1)

A Sunday paper was issued from that time forward but it continued purely as a newspaper and did not take on any distinctive features until the close of the decade. "Want ad" advertisers then began to take space more freely in the Sunday edition than in others and it became necessary to increase the paper from the usual four to six pages. In 1871

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition, Section II. p. 5.



it became double the size of the daily.

## 2. As Newspaper and Magazine.

It was a year later, at the period which was generally so bare in newspaper development, that the magazine features of the Sunday Tribune were first introduced. The issue of March 10, 1872, contained a few special articles of local nature.

This was followed by more than a decade in which the Sunday paper became the repository of many special news stories from surrounding territory and gradually increased in size.

The first really significant development in the making of the modern paper came in 1885 with the use of illustrations. The writer in the Jubilee edition speaks briefly of the processes used:

Pictures were first used in the Sunday Tribune as a feature in 1885. They were made by the chalk plate process, and frequently turned out to be crude and unsatisfactory to both readers and publishers.... Soon after this the plan of making zinc etchings from pen-and-ink drawings was perfected and newspaper illustrations began to assume an important place in the make-up of the paper. (1)

A specimen of Sunday newspaper enterprise peculiar to this time was the reprinting as a supplement to the paper, April 25, 1882, the first edition of the Revised New Testament to reach American soil. A member of the Tribune staff went to London for the purpose of obtaining the first copy there, but finding this impossible, accompanied the first consignment to America across the ocean. He seized a copy when the boxes were first

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition, June 10, 1897.



opened on the wharf at New York and rushed it to Chicago by train, where it was set up in a sixteen-page supplement on Saturday night and great numbers of it sold two days before other papers (even in New York) were able to take notice of the revision.

The combination of news, illustrations and special articles is to be observed best in the early months of 1887. During those months the size of the Sunday edition increased to thirty-two pages, nearly three times that of the daily, and the circulation reached the <sup>then</sup> enormous figure of 66,000, which was considerably more than that of the daily edition.

More than half of the reading matter was still given up to special news dispatches rather than to feature articles. There were foreign cables and Washington and New York specials and in addition there was the weekly news from the suburbs and surrounding country. These were all written in the regular news style of the time and the regular news headings were used, as might be expected.

Though not divided formally into sections, the last eight pages was the magazine part. Here were found two pages of genuine feature articles, a column of clipped verse and another column of clipped humor, a page of feature and fiction reprint and another page of dramatic and musical criticism. The last three pages included real estate and market news, sports and news of feature interest from the big cities of the country.

All of this "magazine stuff" was headed in the usual news



styles. Small headlines (not over 10-point) were given the less important articles, while department heads or a very long article got perhaps a quarter-inch-high, one-line, one-column head. The regular news decks followed giving the gist of the article. The make-up was the same as in the news columns, the articles being placed by the printer where they would fit and without any regard to prominence.

### 3. Feature Articles.

The style of the body of the articles varied with the individual authors. It was a leisurely, somewhat climatic, not a news but rather an essay style. Readability as it is now understood, however, does not seem to have been demanded.

A sufficiently wide range of subjects, such as would interest any kind of reader seems, however, to have been included. Here are the titles of the feature articles on Sunday, April 24<sup>1885</sup>: Lead a Dual Life; The Modern Englishman; Corns on Dainty Feet; On the Island of Ceylon; Clara Belle's [New York Society] Gossip; Hunting a House; Dangers in Our Homes; [John T.] Raymond's Mania for "Matching"; Alex. Mitchell's Career; Over the American Alps; An Outfit for an Angler; The Duke Needed Sleep [from Paris]; New Style of Hairdressing; Gambling in Chicago; Hands at the Throttle; Woman and Her Parasol; Man's Inhumanity to Man; Scientific Brevities;

It will thus be seen that woman's interests are already



looked after, while home and business affairs are frequently touched upon and the wonders of science are beginning to afford material for the feature writers. Only two of the articles are signed -- by Adolf Houssaye and Joseph Howard -- and these signatures are given little prominence.

#### 4. Modern Sensations.

In the following decade or more the Sunday paper grew to a regular edition of some fifty pages. In the last years of Mr. Medill's life it had expanded so as to take on quite the appearance (without the color features) of the Sunday paper of today.

An analysis of one of the Sunday papers of a month or six weeks before Mr. Medill's death (and it will be remembered that while not in actual control of all details that he was then still working on the paper) shows it divided into five distinct sections. Pages 1 - 9 contain the same general and sport news found in the daily paper; the second section (pages 9 - 16) is the special news section; pages 17 - 24 are filled with want ads.; following that is the "editorial sheet" occupying twelve pages and including feature articles, art, drama and music, society and women's clubs and real estate and commerce; and last is a magazine section containing features and short stories alone.

The special dispatches are treated as before under the regular news headings and in the news style. Society and real estate are treated in the same way. Art, drama and



music, however, get a conventional and fairly large departmental head with the single word "Art", "Drama", or "Music" wrought into it and the subject matter is treated from the editorial point of view.

But it is in the feature articles that the greatest development since 1887 is noticed. Instead of being tucked away under unobtrusive news heads anywhere on the page that it might suit the make-up man to put them, they get banner heads and occupy prominent positions at the top or near the top of the page. Only reprint features are used now to fill in. The type in the titles is quite large and the illustrations, though unsensational and without colors, do quite a good deal to play up the reading matter. A Hearst feature for instance, an "Exposure" of some ingenious mechanical fraud, occupies a whole double-page under a banner-head sweeping almost all the way across and is appropriately trimmed with all kinds of models and pictures around the edges.

That the subject matter has also become quite modern can also be shown by the very contents of the titles themselves; Comparative Naval Strength of Nations; Woman's Weekly Cycle; Electricity for Rheumatism; Reconstruction of Cuba; Love-making in Lapland; Consul's Advice to Drummers'; Great Men's Crime; Gotham's Self-Advertised Society; Old Styled Grip; Want War Horses; Hayes' War Story; Alaska Blue Fox Farms; Exposure of the Monumental Fraud of the Century; Sheathing Warships; Tolstoi's Health Rules; To Revive Billiards; From Snow to June Roses; Golf Paper



No. III. On Clubs and Balls; Street Nomenclature an Interesting Study; Where Women Dictate the Divorce Laws; Easy Pickings for a Swindler; Falls Back on Fake Statistics; Anecdotes of a Famous Judge; Surprise in an Express Box.

The popular science, the medical, the crime, and the sport features had all already come in.

In addition there was one short-story in the features section. Illustrations had grown quite large--about five by six inches-- and a display effect in them is already to be seen.

In general it may be said that the Sunday edition of 1899 as in the editions of earlier years, is both informative and entertaining. But is evident that purely entertaining matter has already gained considerable ground.



## CHAPTER VIII

### Advertising

#### 1. Early Advertising.

The Tribune has always been a good advertising medium. In the earliest extant edition, that of December 28, 1850, we find that nearly a page of the four-page paper published is taken up with advertisements. This was probably more advertising than was carried by any of the other four or five small papers in Chicago at that time and for a frontier city of only fifteen or twenty thousand it is not inconsiderable.

It is significant that all except one are not display ads. Personal notices and wants have always been a conspicuous feature of the Tribune advertising columns. This display ad., which was of a travelling theatrical company, was likewise the only one to contain an illustration. That was one of a stage-coach, probably taken from the type case.

A decade later (at the beginning of the War) advertising had assumed considerable importance and bulk. By that time the ratio of advertising to reading matter had already reached forty percent and we find the Tribune of that period carrying fully that much. A typical issue carries fifteen of its thirty-six columns in advertising, three of them on the front page. Those on the front page were the "new ads" which had been changed recently.

Attempts at display consisted, at this time, of the repetition of one phrase over and over. Thus "Bitterwine of



"Iron" is repeated in one column six times. Black type was used for this purpose but it was not large. So far, advertisers seem to have understood only one psychological principle.

The advertising on the inside pages was regularly classified and seems to have included every subject except liquor and tobacco. As may have already been noticed, it did most emphatically include patent medicines, which Mr. Medill apparently never had any occasion to disqualify.

Nearly ten years later, after the paper had expanded in news and circulation with the Civil War, advertising began to count as a factor in the make-up of the paper and here again "want ads" and small notices, were the most prominent. Says a writer in the Jubilee Edition;

Up to the year 1869 there did not seem to be any special reason for increasing the original size of the Sunday paper from four pages, though it is true an extra column was added to the sheet, making a total of ten columns to the page.

During the latter part of 1869, however, the evidences of a marvelous growth of the Western city were beginning to manifest themselves. The last page of the issue each Sunday had to be devoted to classified advertisements, and during the latter part of the year it was found necessary to increase the size of the paper from four to six pages, (1).

No particular development of advertising took place in the '70's, though during that time the paper became large enough for it to be excluded entirely from the editorial page. Early in the '80's the want and the display ads. seem to have occupied an equal number of columns. The front-page was, moreover, still very frequently filled wholly or

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition. June 10, 1897.



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in part with advertisements in the absence of important news.

## 2. Illustrations and Display.

In 1886 (with the development of the modern paper) advertising was relegated to the inside and back pages alone, but the bulk of advertisements at this time and for the next two or three years had apparently not yet caught up with the number of columns printed. We count only ten columns of display and six of wants out of a total of seventy. There are some illustrations, however, and the development of modern advertising seems to have begun concurrently with modern news publishing.

This development went forward steadily during the last decade of Mr. Medill's life, though the great bulk of modern advertising scarcely came until after his death. Throughout his life the balance of display and want advertising continued pretty even in the daily editions. It was only in the Sunday editions that the great advertising era of the next fifteen years was presaged.

A month or six weeks before Mr. Medill's death a Sunday Tribune contained one hundred and sixty columns of advertisements of which a hundred were display. Eight full pages or about half the display advertising was that of department stores, apparently without a limit to type size. .

Illustrations, however, continued to be small, (as indeed they do today in comparison with news and feature cuts), and bore ~~a~~ strong resemblance to the news and feature illus-



trations of ten years before. None included a background for more than one object.

The classified advertising and the reading notices were practically the same in form and substance as they are today.

As was said before, no liquor or tobacco advertisements were seen in the Tribune during Mr. Medill's lifetime. Whether this is by accident or by the deliberate policy of the management, the writer has no means of knowing. It is known, however, that Mr. Medill was keenly conscious of the evils of alcoholism and used every means in his power for the cure of inebriates. Whether his feelings on this matter were such as to cause him to refuse liquor advertisements for the Tribune is an uncertain matter; and hence we cannot say that the mere fact that there were no liquor advertisements noted is a distinct contribution to journalism.

It is certain, however, that, if there was any exclusion policy, it did not go further than this. Although a foe (at least in private life) of alcohol and habit forming drugs, Mr. Medill was a firm friend of patent medicines. Like every one else of his time, he probably thought they did much more good than harm. And so they had more than ready access to the Tribune columns. We even find there, near the close of the century, the famous "Swamp Root" against which the Tribune has waged bitter war in late years.

That fake business seems to have still associated with honest appears from this notice in the brokers' column of January 29, 1899:



1,000% profit can be made inside of one month by speculating in a certain stock (listed on both N. Y. Exchanges). Inside information with full particulars, given free to a few conservative and reliable parties, who can reward me according to their own inclination after profit has been made. Address in confidence (under seal) "Insider", Room 39, Morse Bldg., New York.

That, in the vernacular, looks "pretty fishy".

Whether the Tribune policy has ever been influenced by advertisers, it is impossible for the writer to say. P. C. McFarlane, in his article "Explaining Keeley" (in Collier's) says that the advertising influence has swayed Keeley not in the least. Perhaps that is a tradition in the Tribune office; if it were not, we should never know. But it is enough to say that in the last year of Mr. Medill's life (1899) these advertisements appeared as its self-professed policy:

The Tribune Prints All the News All the Time

---

The Tribune has pronounced opinions and is fearless in expressing them.

It is not neutral or colorless;

It is not constantly trimming in an endeavor to please both sides for commercial reasons.

Joseph Medill, as far as his lights on matters of advertising lead him, probably had little to repent of.



## CHAPTER IX

### Circulation

#### 1. Lincoln a Subscriber.

The history of the circulation of the Tribune is one of the most fascinating chapters in journalistic history in the United States. How it began with a circulation of only four hundred a few years before Joseph Medill bought into the paper and how with some fluctuations it increased steadily until at his death it was one of the largest in the country is a story which is well worth the telling. It is all the more interesting in view of the wonderful strides which the circulation has taken since Mr. Medill's death, until now, not quite seventy years after its foundation, it is probably second in the United States and among the half dozen largest in the world.

The circulation in 1847, when the paper was started, was four hundred. In a year or so it had reached a thousand. We do not know what circulation it had when Mr. Medill joined the staff in 1855, but it was but a few thousand at the most. At no time in the ante-bellum period was the Tribune very strong either in circulation or advertising.

Probably the most famous subscriber the Tribune has ever had, however, joined its clientele shortly after Mr. Medill came to Chicago. The story of how his subscription was taken by Mr. Medill himself is told thus picturesquely: <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.



.....He was sitting at his desk one morning in the spring of '55 when an uncouth looking man entered. What took place was afterward told by Mr. Medill himself in this fashion. Lincoln asked:

"Can you tell me when I can see Dr. Ray?"

Dr. Ray was then the senior editor of the Tribune. He was not in.

"Well", continued the visitor, still addressing the young man at the top of the table, "may I ask if you are the new editor from Cleveland - McDill or Medill, or something?"

"I am Medill, the new editor," the young man answered.

"Well, I guess you'll do just as well."

The new editor asked, and with a degree of formalism quite foreign to the Chicagoan of forty years ago (for the manner of the visitor had been decidedly brusque): "Please tell me whom I have the pleasure of addressing?"

"Well" (this drawing expletive for the third time), "Well, down on the Sangamon River they used to call me 'Abraham Lincoln.' Now they generally call me 'Old Abe,' though I ain't so very old either."

"Old Abe" was already a name to conjure with in Illinois. The "new editor from Ohio" directly gave to his visitor a seat and engaged him in conversation of a lively interest to both. But first there was business to be done.

"I'm in a hurry," the hero of Sangamon River began, "but I came up to subscribe for your paper, I can't get it regular down our way, so I borrow it from a neighbor. But sometimes he lends it before I get around. Now I want to pay for six months ahead," and he pulled from the cavernous pockets of his "jeans" a pocketbook, untied the strap and counted out four \$1 bills. Mr. Medill took the money (there was no beastly pride in those days to separate the great editor from the counting-room), and wrote a receipt on a sheet of "copy" paper. This document Mr. Lincoln thrust into his pocket, remarking as he did so: "I like your paper; I didn't like it before you boys took hold of it; it was too much of a Know-Nothing sheet."

Lincoln and the new editor quickly became friends and when in 1858 Lincoln ran for United States Senator from Illinois the Tribune was his staunchest supporter. After that campaign Lincoln wrote:

Springfield, June 15, 1859.

Press & Tribune Company  
Gentlemen

Herewith is a little draft to pay for your daily for another year from today -- I suppose I shall take the Press and Tribune so long as it, and I, both live unless I become unable to pay for it -- In its devotion to our cause always, and to me personally last year, I owe it



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a debt of gratitude which I fear I shall never be able to pay.

Yours very truly,  
A. Lincoln. (1)

Undoubtedly Lincoln made good his promise and his name continued to be enrolled on the circulation books of the Tribune until his death.

## 2. A Leader.

When the war came, the Tribune, presumably by reason of better news service, immediately forged to the front in circulation. Hudson in his History of American Journalism has this to say:

One of the Chicago correspondents in mentioning the newspapers of that city after the Rebellion said:

The newspapers of this city flourished during the war, and reached large circulations. The Tribune took the lead, and its daily issues were sometimes 45,000. The Journal probably printed about half that number and the Times two-thirds. But now the Tribune prints only 18,500, the Journal 7,000 and the Times 15,000. (2)

This shows also a steady decline which took place in the late 60's and continued through the '70's. Not only was the excitement of war all over, but the price of the paper at that time was probably prohibitive to many. A writer in the Jubilee number (June 10, 1897) thus speaks of the rise in price, which had taken place during the Civil War.

The original price of The Tribune, so far as is known, was three cents per copy or fifteen cents per week, though it may have been twelve and one half cents a week for a time. A glance over the early files of the paper does not show any change in this price until Monday, November 24, 1862, when the rather unique scale of twenty cents per week was adopted...

(1) From original in Tribune office of editors and proprietors.

(2) Hudson, Fredrick. History of American Journalism.p.203.



The era of five-cent newspapers, which lasted for many years, had now been entered upon. All the great dailies of the country came up to the five-cent standard. (1)

This was due to the greatly increased cost of print paper which, since paper was then manufactured from cotton rags, had taken place during the Civil War. For some reason the price was never reduced until some twenty years later and it is distinctly to be observed that during this period the Tribune was not an extremely popular paper.

Rowell's American Newspaper Directory of 1869 gives The Tribune a daily circulation of 30,000 and a weekly circulation of 41,000, not to mention 13,000 tri-weekly, though these figures are by no means certified. Chicago was then a rapidly growing city which had already reached 250,000 population and in which since the War the Tribune had few rivals. But the Tribune's subscription price was twelve dollars a year.

In 1872 Rowell's states that the Tribune "objects to having its circulation stated", [because it had fallen off severely as the result of the campaign for Greeley] and thereafter for some years it was only estimated. In 1877 its daily circulation was reported as 33,891, not greatly in excess of its claims of eight years before. The tri-weekly had fallen to almost nothing - 1000 or more - and shortly afterwards it was discontinued. The weekly circulation was estimated at 18,000.

(1) Chicago Tribune, Jubilee Edition, June 10, 1897.



, 3. Price Reduced.

Two years later (1879) a considerable reduction in price took place and subscriptions were taken also for the Sunday paper only. An increase is to be inferred accordingly and probably the Sunday paper was near to the 50,000 mark. The estimated population of Chicago at that time was 450,000, though the Sunday Tribune particularly, probably reached a large country population also.

Matters ran along in this way for five or six years, until, we read:

Mechanical improvements allowed the reduction to three cents in 1886. Circulation increased enormously and in 1888 a reduction to two cents was made. (1)

The daily circulation given at the top of the page in 1887 was 56,425 with the Sunday edition several thousands in excess. The lowering of the price had already begun to tell.

In 1888 Rowell's placed the Tribune in the following class of newspapers:

1. Circulates among a prosperous class of readers.
2. Circulation not forced, but almost exclusively among people who buy and pay for the publication because they have learned to know and appreciate its real value.
3. Has a subscription list of paid-up subscribers among the very best of the class to the advancement of whose interests it is specially devoted.
4. Has a long-sustained circulation among a regular list of yearly subscribers.
5. When the character of the circulation is considered is to be counted the very best.

Chicago had already reached a population of nearly three quarters of a million and the Tribune had continued to lead.

(1) Jubilee Edition, June 10, 1899.



That the Tribune's statement was correct to the best of the knowledge and investigation of Rowell's advertising agency is indicated again in 1890, when a circulation considerably in excess of 50,000 is indicated.

In the '90's indeed the final step is taken which put the purchase of the paper within the power of every one. Says the Jubilee edition:

Seven years later came the most startling cut in the Tribune's history. On Sunday, Nov. 10, 1895, The Tribune startled the newspaper world and the people of the whole country by announcing that on the next day its price would be one cent a copy...The movement had many elements of danger in it and the step was not taken until every phase was given the most careful consideration... The one-cent wave was certain, however, to sooner or later sweep across the country. The Tribune determined to lead the procession. Again was the experiment in reduction a success, and an enormous increase in circulation was the result. (1)

The population was then considerably in excess of 1,000,000 and the circulation immediately soared above the 75,000 limit.

No accurate figures are given for the remaining three or four years of Mr. Medill's life, but it is safe to say that before his death in March, 1899, it had risen to 100,000. He had seen its influence and circulation extended more than ten-fold in less than half-a-century.

(1) Jubilee Edition, June 10, 1899.



## CHAPTER X

### Business Management

#### 1. Value of Plant.

The capital value of the Tribune is said to have been replaced almost entirely after a fire in 1848 by an insurance policy for two thousand dollars. It is not known what Mr. Medill or Dr. Ray paid for their third and fourth shares in 1855, but probably neither share cost more than a few thousand dollars.

Of course, the value of all holdings increased enormously during the War and when the Tribune Company was incorporated in 1862, Mr. Medill's one-third share must have then amounted to about \$70,000. In another decade, in spite of a none too rapidly increasing circulation, the value must have again jumped enormously for Professor Elias Colbert says:

A large block of it [Tribune stock] sold on the basis of \$1,000,000 as long ago as October, 1874, when Mr. Medill purchased from Messrs. White and Cowles enough to give him the controlling interest... and that sale was made under the heavy depreciation of values which followed the panic of 1873.<sup>(1)</sup>

Whether Mr. Medill went into debt for any of this amount we do not know.

A very complete statement of the ownership and value of the Tribune was given at the time of Mr. Medill's death in 1899. It is as follows:

The Tribune stock is said to consist of 200 shares, par value \$200,000. Of this Mr. Medill is reported to have held, ten years ago, 105 shares, Horace White 101 shares and

(1) History of the Chicago Tribune, in Chicago and the Northwest, Vol. II. p. 261. Edited by Rufus Blanchard.



the Cowles estate 30 shares, the Gross estate 50 shares and scattering 5 shares. It is doubted if Horace White holds his 10 shares at the present time. Ten years ago the net earnings of the paper were given at \$275,000 a year, and at the present time are supposed to be \$400,000.

Some five years ago Mr. Medill placed the value of his shares of the paper's stock at \$2,000,000, which would make his valuation of the whole paper nearly \$4,000,000. (1)

Mr. White continues to hold his shares as do the other owners mentioned, including the Medill estate.

Perhaps the fact that he came to Chicago with only a few thousand dollars in his pocket and died a millionaire by editorial work alone is after all Mr. Medill's greatest contribution to journalism. With native shrewdness he sought out a busy place in which to make his views known and then "grew up with the town."

## 2. Business Manager.

The business manager of the Tribune was for thirty or more years Mr. Alfred Cowles of Cleveland, Ohio, who had been associated with Mr. Medill in the conduct of the Cleveland Leader. Mr. Cowles died in 1889 and left practically nothing which throws any light on his character or business methods. It is sufficient to say that, in later years particularly, the Tribune took in quite a great deal of advertising and that in general Mr. Cowles' management must have been a success.

He was succeeded in 1889 in the position of secretary-treasurer of the Tribune company by Mr. Robert W. Patterson, who has been mentioned as managing editor previous to that

(1) Colbert, Elias W. History of the Tribune.



time. Mr. Patterson is probably responsible for the successive reduction in price which so increased circulation, though under his regime advertising seems either not to have been forthcoming or to have been neglected. On Mr. Medill's death he accepted the presidency of the Tribune company and the business management passed to the younger Alfred Cowles.

The business manager at present is William H. Field.

There is nothing to be said about the relation of the editors to the owners and management. The editors have always been the owners. and there is evidence enough that the Tribune has never been "edited from the counting room".<sup>(1)</sup> Just what the proportion of advertising to subscription revenue was, it is impossible to say, but it is probable that it grew increasingly larger with reduced subscriptions prices and the rise of department stores towards the end of Mr. Medill's life.

As a matter of fact, the Tribune has never pretended to be anything other than a commercial newspaper. As such, however, it has been one of the greatest successes throughout the whole length and breadth of the United States.

(1) See, however, the Appendix.



## CHAPTER XI

### The Influence of Mr. Medill and the Tribune.

#### 1. Medill's Influence.

Mr. Medill's influence was always political and was exerted almost entirely through the editorial columns of the Tribune. Over the news columns, as we have seen, he exerted comparatively little personal jurisdiction. But from the time that he first began work on the Coshocton Republican his editorials were a source of power. Through them he was able to aid materially in the formation of the Republican party in Ohio. On removing to Chicago, in 1855, he did turn for a while to the use of the news columns and it was there that in 1858 the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates were reported, probably under his direction. He, with Dr. Ray, then made the Tribune a large factor in the nomination of Lincoln.

A writer in the Tribune at the time of Mr. Medill's death speaks of his personal influence just before the war period as follows:

He became a factor in the public affairs of Chicago and of Illinois before hostilities broke out. The Tribune stood for the preservation of the union in that uncertain period when public sentiment in the North was slowly feeling its way to the time when it should sustain the President in his call for troops. In The Tribune in those days, as always, Mr. Medill wrote "The United States is" and spelled Nation with a capital "N". (1)

As spokesman of the strong Union sympathizers in Chicago during the war he maintained this strong position of influence. The violence excited against the Tribune by Democratic sympathizers in 1863, when Mr. Medill had become editor-in-chief for the first time, is sufficient indication

(1) Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1889.



of the power he wielded. Mr. Lincoln, we are told, in the Lincoln Centenary edition, considered the Tribune "his chief journalistic champion in the West."

After the War Mr. Medill's personal influence in politics began to show itself. In 1869 he was elected to the Constitutional Convention of Illinois, and says the Times:

...He was the leader of the Cook County delegation that went to the constitutional convention, and his part in the framing of the constitution was most prominent. (1)

His personal influence was again markedly demonstrated after the great fire of 1870 when he was the unanimous nominee of the "Fireproof League" for mayor of the city. He accepted only on condition that he be supported in his efforts to improve materially (by charter changes and otherwise) the city government. This support was given and he was able before the expiration of his term to give Chicago an efficient and non-partisan fire and police force and to have a new charter passed by the Legislature which materially improved the government. In addition, by one of his fellow-citizens it was said, (Mr. Luther Lufkin Mills) at the time of his death that

...His successful efforts for the establishing of our great system of parks and the creating of the public library are illustrations of what he has done for our city...

Another citizen (Mr. John Hammond) interviewed in the Times said that

...He was the best mayor Chicago ever had, and if he were in the chair to-day, Chicago would be a greater city than it is. (2)

He was a strong advocate of civil service reform and in 1870 President Grant insisted that he become a member of the first Civil Service commission. He served there for

(1) Chicago Times. March 20, 1899.

(2) *Ibid.*



some time and then resigned, after making a recommendation for a single term for the President as the best means of avoiding the evils of patronage.

In 1874 Mr. Medill became majority stockholder in the Tribune company and editor-in-chief of the Tribune, and thereafter his influence was largely confined to the editorial columns. He exerted a large influence as an independent editor in state and local affairs, but nationally continued to be a strong supporter of the Republican administration. Whatever political influence he may have exerted at this time was due entirely to the position of his paper. "He never desired public office", we are told, "but preferred his position of power as an editor to any public place."<sup>(1)</sup> In speaking to a friend a few weeks before his death he said:

Garfield sent for me after he was elected, and I visited him at Mentor. My association with him had not been close, and I was never more surprised in my life than when he offered me a place in his Cabinet. He wanted me to be Postmaster General; and, when I declined it, he insisted that I take my place in the Cabinet, save three, which he had already arranged for. All of this I declined, when he said: 'Mr. Medill, what am I to do if I cannot rely for assistance on such men as you?' I told him that my assistance, so far as it did not interfere with the management of my paper, was subject to his command and that my advice was always at his service; and when he then suggested a man for his Secretary of State, I said immediately: 'Why of course you won't do that. You must appoint Blaine.' This, as is well known, was not his wish, but he afterwards did it.

The exigencies of the preliminary campaign were such that when Mr. Harrison was nominated I was not at all sure of his friendship, but after his election he also offered me a place in his cabinet. This, however, I had little

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.



difficulty in declining, as my business, and my health as well, were such at that time as to make it impossible for me to serve. (1)

Further than this we have the testimony of Seidle in his "Photographs of Statesmen of the United States" (published in 1894) that Mr. Medill had already been offered the position of foreign minister by many presidents, and that in 1894 his friends had already begun to talk of him seriously as a candidate for United States Senator.

We have already spoken in the chapter on Mr. Medill's life and character of the various official positions he held in journalistic and commercial circles of Chicago. F. F. Cook in his reminiscences on "Bygone Days in Chicago" speaks of a bank of which Mr. Medill was one of the directors. His connection with the World's Columbian Exposition (as well as of his work of relief during the Great Fire) and other civic celebrations have likewise been spoken of.

He delivered a few lectures but beyond that we do not know of his taking part in non-journalistic activities. Even these lectures were connected with political and journalistic subjects.

## 2. Influence of the Tribune.

The influence of the Tribune during Mr. Medill's lifetime is difficult to estimate accurately. The man and his

(1) Chicago Times-Herald, March 20, 1899.



paper were so closely bound together during the whole of his connection with it that the influence of the one might truthfully be said to be the influence of the other.

Few newspapers have surpassed the Tribune as a political power. It became, as says one writer a "political bible to people throughout the whole Northwest."<sup>(1)</sup> Indirectly it was an influence on the national administration and national policies. This was true from the time of Lincoln's administration on.

Further than this nothing can be said with definiteness. The Tribune stood for good government everywhere and the suppression of the liquor evil as far as possible. It advocated and secured for Chicago a system of high licenses. It always stood for morality in the editorial columns. It helped more than any other agency in building up Chicago.

Its influence in general was good. It was progressive and brought its principles to bear upon its readers with an intensity of conviction which must have betrayed great moral force.

In the field of journalistic method pure and simple we can find nothing distinctive which the Tribune had to contribute. It followed rather than led in matters of style and methods of news-gathering. But it was a good follower. Once shown the way, its enterprises often eclipsed that of the earlier pioneers. In strenuousness it, in conjunction with other Chicago newspapers, began to lead in the "newspaper game" and it has always been first in Chicago.

(1) Andreas, A. T. Vol. II. p. 258.



## AFFENDIX I.

### An Episode in the History of the Tribune

Medill owned most of the Tribune stock. His will left his holding in a twenty-five year trust with three trustees of equal power, One was his son-in-law, Robert W. Patterson; a second, his other son-in-law, Robert S. McCormick, later Ambassador to Hungary, to Russia, and to France; and the third, his old associate and personal attorney, William G. Beale. Under this management the publication went ahead wonderfully....

But Beale served on the board of trustees, and voted one-third of the Medill stock. And Beale is not a journalist. He is a corporation attorney. He has the corporation point of view. He believes, probably that the people prosper only as superior beings take care of them. Doubtless he believes that there are two kinds of morality - home and business. We cannot quarrel with his opinions and motives. He is what nature and environment made him, and nature gave him great diplomatic ability, as environment this point of view.

Had the Patterson and McCormick interests voted their two-thirds of the trusteeship as a unit, Beale, with his one-third, were an unconsidered factor. But social and personal ambitions divided them. McCormick's ambition made him ambassador. And Beale, carefully widening the division, voted now with the McCormicks against the Pattersons and now with the Pattersons against the McCormicks. So again and again



was able to impose on editors, reporters, and editorial writers a policy which made them grind their teeth. For five or six years thereafter the course of the "Tribune" became spotted - a streak of white, followed by a small streak of dirty gray.

By old 'ts old policies, the "Tribune" should have opposed Senator Lorimer's original election. Keeley, who finally exposed Lorimer, must have suspected then, as well as he knows now, what forces backed him. ....But Beale prevailed; the "Tribune" held its peace on Lorimer. The so-called Drainage Canal plan involved using that stream to make electricity for the municipal supply. But that would have hurt the Edison Company. Beale got the reins again, and again the "Tribune" favored the corporation side. Finally, but for Beale we might have needed no Insurgent fight on Cannon. The "Tribune" has real power even in Danville; had it started one of its strong, intelligent campaigns against Cannon's re-election in 1908, it might have turned the balance. But Beale tightened the reins; and Cannon was elected.

In the course of these office disturbances, Medill McCormick virtually resigned as publisher. Then, when the "Tribune" seemed sentenced to silence and blackness, the situation shifted again. The McCormicks and Tattershaws were brought together. Beale was squelched. McCormick returned to his desk. Keeley became general manager with full power. The paper emerged into a spot of white. Immediately the "Tribune" exonerated an old sinner. Keeley accepted an opening to let in the light on Lorimer, found just what influence elected him, and published an exposé which, for technical efficiency, was a journalistic masterpiece. -- Will Irwin in Collier's, July 1, '11.



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